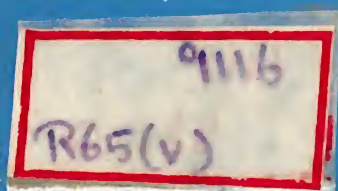


VEDA and TANTRA

The Atharva Veda

M. Sundar Raj



AVAROHANA -
THE DESCENT



ABOUT THE BOOK

"With an unanimity rare in Indological studies, the Atharva Veda has been condemned to ignominious oblivion by being dubbed a book of sorcery and black magic not deserving serious examination. How did a work of this nature, if indeed such an interpretation be correct, come to be included in the Vedic corpus, as a piece of revealed religion, "seen" by the rishis in mystic trance? What has been its impact and destiny in Hinduism?" These are the two main questions which the author sets out to answer in his work, "Veda and Tantra (The Atharva Veda)".

A thorough analysis of the hymns of the Atharva Veda, followed by chapters on the connection between that work and the Rg Veda on the one hand, and the Indus Valley Seals on the other, enable the author to establish that (1) in the Atharva Veda we see the beginnings of Tantra and Agamas, (2) all the Hindu samskaras have their origin in that work, (3) the roots of both the Rg and Atharva Vedas lie in the Indus Valley and finally (4) it is possible to attempt the reconstruction of a 'Ur', or 'Mother' Veda from which subsequently, under Aryan influence, the four Veda Samhitas, Upanisads, Yoga and Tantra, Jainism, Buddhism, the Agamas, the sectarian disputations of Vaishnavism, Saivism and Sakti, with their innumerable offshoots, have become differentiated. The cleavage in Hindu society, language jingoism, the inhuman caste structure, and the anarchism in Hindu polity have all been the logical outcome. Even the Bhakti cults have failed to put Humpty-Dumpty together again.

Such are some of the important findings and concepts that will hold enchanted the reader of this book, whether he be layman, scholar or religious searcher. The language is simple, and the matter free of ponderosity.

222

VEDA and TANTRA

(THE ATHARVA VEDA)



M. SUNDAR RAJ

PUBLISHED BY

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE
INVESTIGATION OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS

31, Poes Garden
Madras-600 086.

Published by
**INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE
INVESTIGATION OF ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS**

31, Poes Garden
Madras-600 086.

First Edition 1984

3000 Copies

© Author

39, Venkatanarayana Road,
T. Nagar, Madras-600 017.

Price : Rs. 60 in India

General Editor : N. MAHALINGAM

PRINTED BY K. VARGHESE AT THE GUARDIAN PRESS,
38, VENKATESA NAICKEN STREET, CHEPAUK, MADRAS-5.

' Prajapati created Brahmā and seated him on the lotus. The latter now began to think "By what mantra may I be enabled to experience and enjoy all desires, all the worlds, all the gods, all the Vedas, all the sacrifices, all the sounds, all the rewards, all the beings, stationary and moving?" Through yoga, he found the answer in OM, which became his own symbolic mantra, and of which he became the deva.'

—(*Gopatha Brahmana*)

17. The first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the
the first of these is the fact that the

the first of these is the fact that the

DEDICATION

“ With reverence, respect, admiration, affection, and gratitude, this work is dedicated to Shri N. Mahalingam, a devout Hindu, a noble gentleman of great culture, a leading industrialist of South India and a sincere philanthropist ”.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

On behalf of the International Society for the Investigation of Ancient Civilizations, (Madras, India), we have great pleasure in placing before the public our latest publication, entitled 'Veda and Tantra (The Atharva Veda)' by Shi M. Sundar Raj. Scholars are already familiar with his 'Rg Vedic Studies' (six parts) which was also published by us last year. It is the very favourable response evoked by the earlier work that has made us decide to publish this extra-ordinary book, extra-ordinary on account of the almost revolutionary nature of the view taken by the author about the contents of this mysterious text.

The Atharva Veda has received comparatively little attention from both native and Western scholars. Except for Weber, Griffith, Whitney, Lanmann and Bloomfield of the last century, no Western scholar appears to have thought it worthwhile to provide a commentary on it. The native tradition can produce nothing more than the Vāitana Śrauta and Kauśika Grhya Sutras, and Sayana's commentaries, which far from clarifying the text, seem to have succeeded only in earning it a bad name of black magic, etc. Within the last thirty years, two new works have appeared from Indian scholars, namely Profs. Satwalekar and Devichand.

The present work breaks completely fresh ground. It seeks to set aside the calumny of black magic which has so far tarnished the fair name of this, the fourth, Veda and places it on par with, if not at a higher level even, than the Rg Veda. It seeks to provide some of the many missing links in the ancient history of Hinduism. At least two tantalizing features, namely the Indus Valley Civilization's and the tantra's relationships with the Vedas have come within the purview of this work. The author promises to go into these matters in greater detail later in future works of his.

How far the author has succeeded in achieving his objective in this present work is not for us to say. That is a matter for

earned scholars and our other readers to decide. However, the foreword to this work coming from such an eminent authority as Shri Agnihotram Ramanuja Tatachariar has encouraged us to take confidence that the author's, and our efforts will not go in vain.

September 2, 1984.


N. MAHALINGAM

*General Editor, International
Society for the Investigation of
Ancient Civilizations.*

FOREWORD

Shri Sundar Raj, the Vedic Scholar, having presented last year his interpretation on Rg Vedic mantras, has now come forward with his views on the Atharva Veda which are presented in this book entitled 'Veda and Tantra' (The Atharva Veda). The previous book has been welcomed by scholars as a new modern approach to the Rg Veda. Similarly, this work deserves their thoughtful consideration. Since the eternal nature of the Vedas as claimed by the smrtis is corroborated by the Vedas themselves, attempts to interpret them by scholars from time to time are not an unhealthy practice, for an understanding of basic concepts is always aided by intellectual analysis from time to time. It is with this objective that the author has come forward with a fresh approach to the subject based on his own personal understanding of it.

To modern scholarship, the Atharva Veda appears as a puzzle on account of the mysterious and unique nature of its contents. The unique feature about the Atharva Veda is that it reads as a book of charms and incantations. If this was all, we could easily dispose it off as a work dealing with black magic. But, there are to be found in the work many hymns whose contents are replete with deep philosophical thought which have become the base of all Upaniṣadic philosophy. Also, there are here concepts such as that of Brahmācāri and the Vratya which are peculiar to this saṁhita, and there are also many others of this nature.

In Hindu philosophical thought the word 'Brahman' plays an important role, and Vedantic philosophers give enormous importance to it. Upaniṣadic teaching is termed as 'Brahma-vidyā'. The author of Brahmasutra took the word 'Brahman' as the base on which to build his philosophical system. Nevertheless, the full meaning of the word 'Brahman' stands still undetermined. In fact, comparatively speaking, this word occurs more often and with a greater variety of connotations in the Vedas than in the Upaniṣads. There is deep esoterism in all this. The Atharva Veda bears the distinction of being termed the Brahma

Veda as it bases its spiritual concepts on the word 'Brahman'. The Rtvik who follows the Atharva Veda is called Brahma, and generally, Brahmins are referred to in the Rg Veda as Brahma (the word Brahman here being used in the masculine grammatical gender).

What is the meaning of this word 'Brahman'? Mere philosophy has not helped us to understand fully its import since it leads to polemics and endless controversies. On the other hand, by tracing its usage in history some glimpse can be had of its occult significance in the religious thought and practices. The author's attempts to clarify these issues will be found extremely valuable. As pointed out by him, the Atharva Veda is specially interested in demonstrating the association of the word with Tapas, and its occultism. The Rg Veda, as a book of religion, deals with praises and prayers addressed to the divine power. The Yajur Veda talks of rituals which have transcendental value. The Atharva Veda in contrast talks about the individual's ability to acquire occult powers through Tapas and by the performance of the various Saṁskaras. In a word, through the religious guidance provided by this, the fourth Veda, man is enabled to achieve divine status. Significantly, the words Deva and Brahman are seen in essence to be co-ordinate. In the Atharva Vedic cult, Rudra appears as Brahman with both malevolent and benevolent aspects even while remaining in a state of renunciation. Shri Sundar Raj has emphasized in both his works that the Rg Veda while principally concerned with prayers and rituals has not failed to give due regard to Tapas also. In both the Brahmacāri Sūkta and the Vratya Sūkta, these matters are dealt with with unique charm and there are wonderful descriptions of the ascetic way of life. The powers and glory of occultism are most beautifully described.

Shri Sundar Raj has pursued the study of Vedas for the past 20 years. As in his earlier work on the Rg Veda, he has propounded original concepts in this work also. Lovers of the Vedas will find in this new approach much food for thought.

The author has expressed his deep sense of gratitude and obligation to Shri N. Mahalingam, a devout Hindu and a great industrialist, for the encouragement and assistance of various

kinds extended to him in preparing the book and having it published. All scholars and well-wishers of Hinduism will join me, I am sure, in expressing our grateful thanks to Shri N. Mahalingam for this noble service.

A R Tatachar

AGNIHOTRAM RAMANUJA TATACHARIAR.

September 1, 1984.

PROLOGUE

Hinduism today is in search of its personality.

The problem is posed by the need to answer the question 'What is Hinduism ?'

The modern world has forced the Hindu Society into a situation where it has to determine for itself where its identity lies. It is not that the religious values are in question, though even about that there is a large element of ignorance amongst the Hindus themselves. The general belief that it is all spirituality serves well enough for all practical purposes, though it runs contrary to the observable behaviour of the people. The crisis that Hinduism faces today does not lie only there. It is the socio-religious aspect which has become a matter for serious concern.

It is the current political and economic situation which has brought the question to the fore. For thousands of years, the only inter-linking element has been the varṇāśrama-dharma, or as it is more familiarly known, the institution of caste or jati. It is this which decided the matter so far in all situations. The broad outlines of this institution are to be found in the dharma shastras ; the mode and details of its operation are, to a very small extent, illustrated in the general Sanskrit literature including the Ramayana and Mahabharata. In actual operation, however, it is vastly intricate and subtle, and only the individuals and groups that constitute its membership are aware of the rules of the game, which had to be observed strictly, at the risk of incurring severe penalties in case of any infringement. These rules were learnt not from books, but through practices handed down by tradition.

To the vast majority of the people, religion is nothing more than this traditional usage and practice, the details of which they picked up from their elders as they went along. Religious concepts and religious philosophy were the preserve of a small group of elites, but even they did not find it necessary to subject their traditional practices to intellectual analysis. Hence, it has come to pass that, for thousands of years, these people have been guided in their religious and socio-religious life only in the light of their traditions.

The caste or jāti structure of the traditional view of life had been, over the years, worked out to such a fine point of analysis that the individual became just an inert cog, moving automatically in the ever unchanging social wheel whose movements were set to a rigid pattern thousands of years ago. So completely acceptable has been this state of social and political affairs that no one ever felt any call to subject it to a critical analysis or even to take a look at its implications. Consequently, no felt need ever existed for the society to study its own nature in a critical constructive spirit. Unbelievable, but a fact nevertheless ! The society never bothered to give itself, or its religious institutions, a name.

A society without a name ! A thing without a name does not exist. That is the inexorable logic of this society. No 'nāma' no 'rūpa' ! It was the advent of foreigners, Muslims and Christians, which led to the coining of a designation to cover its totality. The problems of administration under the British Raj set the seal upon the term 'Hindu' finally.

The break-down of the institution of caste began with the introduction of Western political and social concepts under the British, though the traditional so-called 'sanatana dharma' (eternal dharma) is under such great pressure that the society has been forced to fit itself into a new shape under the banner of Hinduism, which has been, till now, nothing but a name. It is somewhat like the 'Six Characters in search of an Author' of Pirandello.

The term 'Hindu' has all along been a vague one, and is used essentially in the administrative context, where it is defined,—when definition is called for,—in an entirely negative way. The dilemma that faces this society is, therefore, the very onerous one of giving a positive content to this term, so that it may prove a refuge in the face of the impending, and inevitable, collapse of the traditional 'sanatana dharma'. At the same time, the people find themselves unable to forswear their adherence to tradition, understandably so, since tradition is all that stands at present, not only as social ideology, but as religion as well, in this society, whereas the term 'Hinduism' is lacking altogether in ideology of a well-defined nature. That is why when driven to a corner, and called upon to provide a rationale for his motives, ethics and

conduct, including for example religious homicide, the 'Hindu' appeals to his tradition. A snake cannot shed its skin unless a new one is ready to fit itself into.

Tradition, or at least a firm belief in its existence, is all the ideological heritage that is left to these people. But the fact is that there is not one single tradition, but millions of them, each family if not each individual, having a separate one as their proud possession. The problem of substitution of ideologies, that is of tradition by 'Hinduism', is made more complicated thereby. So many elements are involved in the measures necessary for the survival of this society as a composite one that it looks as if it is almost impossible to achieve it. The many traditions, millions of them, linguistic, and cultural, that fragment it, have to be narrowed down, or at least a common agreement achieved as to the underlying unity of these traditions, as the first step. Thereafter, the concept of Hinduism as emanating from this principle has to be established. (It is not religion but the totality of socio-religious culture that is in question here.) Then only can the people overcome the feeling of social and political insecurity that overwhelms them at present.

It is a unique feature of this society, that it appeals to its traditions and not to its history. The people believe that their traditions are immemorial and have not undergone any change for millennia, which is altogether a mistaken view. Even more mistakenly they consider that these traditions have divine sanctions whereas they are nothing more than mere adaptations to practical needs with a thin veneer of religious cover. On the other hand, they ignore their history, and this is the more fatal mistake, for it is only a knowledge of their own history that can enable a people to understand their problems in an ever-changing world, and make them fit to meet the challenges posed by it. In this respect, even a wrong historical perceptive is better than none at all, for whereas the former can be rectified, nothing can be done with the latter.

The historical perspective is one that sees a logical continuity underlying the evolution of concepts, and the occurrence of events in a direction tending towards a more civilised and cultural way of human life. It reveals also the faults and shortcomings which have led to the downfall of some societies. Hence, its value is double-fold. Furthermore, it provides the proper lessons necessary

for human progress. A mere narration of events is no history in this sense.

The attitude of the society, to which the name 'Hinduism' is assigned today, to its history is extra-ordinary and grievously in error, with consequences very much to its own detriment. The Hindus believe that their golden age of very ancient times was the most golden of all, and that since then there has been nothing but steady deterioration in civilisation. This could well serve as a basis for history, if only some degree of concrete definiteness in regard to time, events, practices, and concepts could be injected into the discussion. Unfortunately, this is not the case. All we have is a beating of breasts and wailings before the wall.

An obscurantist attitude of this nature does the people no good, and in fact creates great problems to themselves. What passes for the history of India today is a mere narration of events and ideas, mostly disconnected. In the process, many of the shortcomings, and errors, are over-looked or white-washed. A history of this nature cannot highlight problems and consequently cannot help in solving them. The invariable excuse for this is the so-called 'lack of historical sources',—which may be good enough, if true,—for not producing a history, but this is not a valid excuse in fact.

The fact is that full use is not made of even the material that is available. It is true that the material we have is not of the same nature as there is for the Western and Semitic civilisations, but that only means that it is useless to apply to this material methods which may be good enough elsewhere. 'Hinduism' possesses a vast amount of religious and quasi-religious literature running without interruption from the most ancient times, but of a genre altogether different from that of other cultures. The 'Hindu mind' works in symbols, and a proper understanding of the symbolism is essential for understanding the course of historical development of the people. Another unique feature of 'Hindu' cultural facet is that, having given expression to a concept in symbols, the latter immediately become concretised, and take a material form of their own. The symbol becomes the reality and the connection between it and the original concept which gave birth to it is erased. The confusion is made more confounded by the habit of using the same symbol to express different ideas. The classical example is

the cow. Myth and mythology is of the very essence of 'Hinduism.' It has so far mistaken the myth for reality. It is no longer able to do so, and does not know what to do in this new situation.

The de-coding of symbolism in 'Hindu' history is indeed a very difficult task, but not an impossible one. But the problem is that both 'tradition' and modern scholarship take the expressions (in art or literature) at their face value, and do not attempt to penetrate the symbols; this short-coming can and must be overcome. The type of history that would emerge if the symbols are correctly decoded would naturally not be the same as history elsewhere, but it is not on that account any the less valuable. It would be a history of religion and culture, and that is more valuable than a catalogue of wars and depredations.

As far as Hinduism is concerned, such a history will reveal the common underlying features that link the innumerable and warring groups that compose it. The search for the Hindu personality—and identity—must, therefore, be turned in this direction, namely, the de-coding of the symbols that pervade the religious literature.

One text which has suffered consistent and considerable neglect is the Atharva Veda, and it is this which forms the subject-matter of this work. The study attempts to demonstrate what results follow when this ancient text is re-read in the light of these observations. Not only does the Atharva Veda appear more meaningful and more valuable, but it also provides connecting links to a number of what have so far appeared as distinctly unrelated concepts and practices, principally yajna (or sacrificial) rituals and concepts on the one hand, and tantrism on the other. By annihilation of this basic dichotomy, the first step has been taken in reconciling the innumerable oppositions and discordances which stand in the way of presenting the evolution of 'Hinduism' in a logical historical perspective. It is hoped that working along these lines it would be ultimately possible to present a modernised and intellectually satisfactory 'Hinduism'. It is to be further hoped that that would provide the framework in which many of the so-called traditions that stand as barriers to integration would be eliminated. This is a vision of the history of Hinduism which, while being true to the actualities, would also serve to provide invaluable teachings for a mankind that is on the brink of catastrophe.

M. SUNDAR RAJ.

VEDA AND TANTRA

(THE ATHARVA VEDA)

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I—Introduction	1
CHAPTER II—‘ Man, the Microcosm and Rudra, the Macro- cosm ’	6
CHAPTER III—Hymns of the Atharva Veda	17
CHAPTER IV—Textual problems	20
CHAPTER V—Subject-wise Reading of the Text	23
Section 1—‘ The Vrātya Hymn ’	23
Section 2—‘ Brahmanising the Tapas Cult ’	26
Section 3—‘ Brahmacārin ’	29
Section 4—‘ Rudra-Śiva ’	31
Section 5—‘ Yoga, Tantra and Śakti ’	35
Section 6—‘ The Samskāras ’	46
<i>a</i> Pre-natal Rites	47
<i>b</i> Child-hood Rites	48
<i>c</i> Educational	48
<i>d</i> Marriage	55
<i>e</i> Funeral	56
Section 7—‘ The Snātaka Hymn ’ (<i>Book XVI</i>)	61
Section 8—‘ Rohita, the Red One ’ (<i>Book XIII</i>)	64
Section 9—‘ Viṣṇu ’ (<i>Book XVII</i>)	68

xviii

Section 10—‘ Rudra, Viṣṇu and Indra ’	70
Section 11—‘ Atharvan and Angirāsa ’	72
Section 12—‘ Oxen, Bulls and Cows ’	75
Section 13—‘ Simple Prayers ’	78
Section 14—‘ Caste and Other Matters ’	80
Section 15—‘ Magic, Medicine and Tantrism ’	82
CHAPTER VI—Analysis of Hymn— <i>Books I to XIII</i>	86
CHAPTER VII—Some Indus Valley Seals	153
CHAPTER VIII—Epilogue—The Rg and Atharva Vedas	159
Appendix Indus Seal Figures	163

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION.

There is a strange unanimity of opinion about the contents of the Atharva Veda, such as does not exist in the case of any other Hindu religious text. All commentators are agreed that it is a 'mantra shastra', a text book of magic, black (sorcery) or white, interspersed with some interesting philosophical speculations on the origin of the universe, which have nothing to do with the magic and healing arts that constitute the principal subject matter. On this question, the views of both the native tradition and modern scholarship are, again, uniquely one.

It might perhaps be concluded that such unanimity could not have been reached without an exhaustive study and critical analysis of the textual material. Such, however, is not the case. In the native tradition, only two kalpa sūtras, namely the Vaitāna Śraūta Sutra, and the Kauśika Gṛhya Śutra have taken notice of it in depth. As for the native commentators, there is the ubiquitous Sayanācārya. Amongst the Western scholars we have only half-a-dozen or so, principally Weber, Bloomfield, and Whitney. Only Griffith and Whitney have provided a translation of the entire text. The authoritative edited text is that of Whitney. Compared to the attention paid by scores of leading Western scholars to the Rg Veda, this is just a miniscule.

As Bloomfield and Whitney have clearly demonstrated, the available text is extremely corrupt and not at all readable in many places. Moreover, it is almost impossible to establish the meaning of many of the words. Faced with these formidable difficulties, the two scholars have had to accept the view of the Kauśika Sutra about the magic nature of the text, backed as it is by native tradition, even though it is realised that the Vedic mantras and the sutraic rituals bear in most cases no logical relationship to one another. That at the best theirs is merely a literal reading of the text has been fully realised by them. Of the nature of the symbolism employed in the text they could, however, scarcely have any suspicion, in

view of the practically complete lack of knowledge of yoga and tantra in the Western world of their times.

It is only recently that Satwalekar has given, in his Hindi commentary and translation, a convincing demonstration of the nature of the symbolism employed in the Atharva Veda. It has been left to him,—he mentions no predecessors—to extricate the Atharva Veda from the unenviable distinction of being the most misunderstood of Vedic texts in spite of being the least read of them. He has shown that many of the hymns and verses are esoteric in nature and are concerned with Yoga, a fact which is openly expressed without much subterfuge in some of the verses and hymns. He is, however, rather cautious and restrained in his approach, with the result that most of the passages even at his hands continue to bear the stamp of the evil art of magic. Without swiniging to the other extreme of exuberance noticeable in the work emanating from the Arya Samaj school, it is possible to show that, barring a small portion of the text, the Atharva Veda is an esoteric text of Yoga and Tantra.

A conclusion of this nature calls for a considerably larger amount of carefully reasoned discussion than has been provided by Satwalekar. This is a *sine qua non* which will not be overlooked when the interpretation and commentary of the Atharva Veda is taken up in this work.

Meanwhile mention must be made of certain happy, though incidental, fall-outs which help to resolve some peripheral issues connected with the Atharva Veda. Bloomfield's Introduction to the Atharva Veda in the Sacred Books of the East Series presents a very comprehensive note on these issues. His views thereon, almost entirely without much change, continue to prevail even today. But with the new interpretation placed on the Atharva Veda it is felt that these views are no longer tenable. The modifications that are now called for find a place in the following discussion.

The most important of these issues is the one that concerns the claim put forward by the Atharvan school in the Atharvan texts that what the Atharva Veda is dealing with is 'brahmavidyā' without however defining the nature of this 'vidyā'. Now, this

term is generally considered to be applicable only to the doctrines enunciated in the Upaniṣads concerning the nature of Brahman which have nothing to do with magic, sorcery and healing. On the ground—mistaken as it is now shown to be—that the Atharva Veda is dealing with matters of the latter type, the validity of the claim of the Atharvan school is disputed. It is then surmised that the designation of brahma-vidyā had been assigned to the Atharva Veda merely by a fortuitous circumstance. It is suggested that at a late stage in Vedic history, this Veda had been appropriated by the 'brahmā' priests to fill a deeply felt want. Unlike the hotṛ, the udgaṛ and the adhvaryu, the other principal priests at a sacrificial ritual, who each was the proud possessor of a Vedic saṁhita all his own, namely the Rg, the Sama and Yajur respectively, the brahmā priest, it is held, did not own a separate Veda. It was, it is said, to fill this void that the brahmā priest appropriated to himself this text as his Veda, which, we are now asked to believe, had till then no patron, leading to its being termed 'brahma-vidyā'. What it was called before this presumed event we are not told.

This explanation tends to strain our credulity. The well-known RV verse 10.71.11 makes it clear beyond any reasonable doubt that the brahmā priest possessed always from the earliest times a text, or Veda, of his own just like the other priests. This verse even gives us an indication of the nature of this Veda. It reads as follows :

ऋचां त्वः पोषं आस्ते पुपुष्वान् गायत्रं त्वः गायत्रं शक्वरीषु ।
ब्रह्मा त्वः वदति जातविद्यां यज्ञस्य मातां वि मिमीते ऊं त्वः ॥

‘(RV. 10.71.11.)’

In translation, this becomes :

‘One plies his constant task at reciting verses ; one sings the holy psalm in Śakvari measures.

One more, the Brahman, tells the lore of being, and one lays down the rules of sacrificing.’
(RV. 10.71.11.).

Griffith has translated ‘jāta vidyā’ as ‘lore of being’, but has explained in his note that it means ‘the knowledge of all that exists’,—which makes for a better rendering,—thereby equating it to ‘brahma-vidyā’. The brahma priest is, therefore, found from

this verse to be reciting a text which is concerned with brahma-vidyā, and in the ordinary course this would be identified with the Atharva Veda. What stands as an obstacle to this inference is the view that looks upon that text as a 'mantra-shastra', dealing with sorcery and black magic. The obstacle, however, vanishes when the esoteric meaning of the text is revealed as referring to Yoga, and Tantra, whose principal concern is the 'knowledge' of the universe.

The present view is also an improvement in another respect. As against the theory of a fortuitous adoption by the high priest of the sacrificial ritual of a 'mantra shastra' dealing with sorcery and the black arts, we have, in the new view, a picture of a natural evolution of the priest and his text of the 'brahma vidyā', rightly so-called.

Another related question is the reason for the status of eminence accorded to the brahma priest at the sacrificial ritual. According to Bloomfield, this was because of the power enjoyed by that priest as the purohita of the king. As against that the new explanation finds that it is the possession of this highly esoteric knowledge of brahma-vidyā which had elevated the brahma priest to both the high offices, namely that of brahma and of purohit. What Bloomfield sees as the cause, the new view sees as the result.

One more interesting problem remains to be tackled. Why did it take the Atharva Veda such a long time to find its way into the Vedic corpus? And where was it till then? Bloomfield does not take note of the second question. On the first, he would presumably attribute the delay entirely to its being a book of sorcery, as seen by him, and, therefore, not a desirable work to be associated with. This would be a good enough reason for total dissociation, but not for a delayed acceptance. On the other hand, according to the present view, it is the highly esoteric nature of its contents, as interpreted in this work, which made the brahma priests, or Atharvans, and Angirases,—we may ignore Bhṛgu for the time being—reluctant to reveal it to others for a long time.

As will be seen from the above discussion various questions of a historical nature can now be examined satisfactorily. For example, by undertaking a comparative study of the Rg and Atharva

Vedas (both as now interpreted), a reconstruction of an ' Ur-Veda ' (the parent or original Veda) may be attempted, as also its connections, if any, with the Indus Valley. The nature of the fire-cults before they were systematised in the Vedas, and the role played by the Atharvans and Angirases in this and other cultural developments can also be traced. These matters will be examined after presenting the esoteric picture revealed by the Atharva Veda when the symbols are read correctly, and when the protective cover of the myths is removed. :

CHAPTER II

MAN, THE MICROCOSM AND RUDRA, THE MACROCOSM,

The Rg Veda limits itself to describing the birth and death of man, and the supplications made by him to the various devas through the medium of sacrificial rituals and worship for prosperity and well-being in this world, and for immortality in the next. It cannot be said that in this matter the supplicant plays a very heroic role. It is the devas who hold the stage there.

It has been left to the Atharva Veda to elevate man to the highest pitch and in the process downgrade the devas who, with the exception of Agni,—especially in his role of Rudra,—as also to some extent Varuna and Indra, play a comparatively insignificant role. By way of contrast, the term 'brahman', which is to be found in the Rg Veda also, is developed along new lines to supersede the devas as an instrument of supernatural power. This is the beginning of the 'brahmanization' of the culture.

Brahman :

The term 'brahman', (neutral or masculine according as to whether the accent falls on the first or second syllable) has many meanings in the Vedic texts. Here, we are concerned principally with three namely (1) a priest, (2) an esoteric knowledge, and (3) the primeval energy. Both the Vedas agree that when referring to the priesthood (nom. sing. brahmā), it signifies not all the categories of priests, but only the special class who preside over the sacrificial rituals and who possess the esoteric knowledge (also termed brahman).

However, there are not more than a dozen passages in the RV (RV 2.2.7, 2.17.3, 2.24.3, 3.18.3, 9.97.34, 10.85.3, 16 and 34, 5.32.12, etc.), where this is the case, whereas there are scores of passages where this word occurs in this text (the AV). This constitutes one of the principal differences between the two saṃhitas. In addition, the Atharva Veda describes the true nature of this esoteric knowledge (brahman or brahma-vidyā), but in symbolic

terms which can only be understood by examining carefully the context in which the word is used. It is clear from many passages that basically there are three parts to this *brahma-vidyā*, namely (1) theoretical knowledge of metaphysics, physiology, psychology and anatomy, (2) certain bodily and mental practices, and (3) certain rituals. By means of these, man attains a psycho-physical state of mystical power. Amongst the rituals, the most important are the mantras, the proper utterance of which, under controlled conditions, generates powers of extra-ordinary kind. (1.10.4, 1.19.4,etc.). Verse 1.19.4 as translated by Griffith reads :

‘The rival and non-rival, he who in his hatred curses us.
May all the deities injure him ! My nearest closest
mail is prayer (brahman).’ (1.19.4)

(The last hemistich is found as the closing pada of the hymn entitled ‘Weapons of War’ in RV 6.75).

The goddess Vāc, who is herself a form of *Aditi* or *Śakti*, is therefore, speaking in the language of the myths, being one of the tutelary deities of this *vidyā*. This is revealed, for example, in RV hymn 10.125 (reproduced in full in part 5 of my ‘*Rg Vedic Studies*’). Verse 3 of this hymn reads as follows (in translation by Griffith) ‘I am the Queen, the gatherer up of treasures, most thoughtful, first of those who merit worship. Thus Gods have stablished me in many places with many homes to enter and abide in’ (RV 10.125.3).

Such is the power of the mantras of the *brahma-vidyā*. The *Atharva Veda* may, therefore, be deemed to be a store-house of such mantras, as well as of all the other particulars the knowledge, observance and application of which are other essential constituents of this *vidyā*.

Of the other rituals, something will be said later, but first the nature of ‘the theoretical knowledge’ imparted by the AV will have to be considered. It consists of (1) metaphysical knowledge, (2) myths, dealing with divine powers ; and (3) physiology and anatomy of the human body.

Metaphysics :

The metaphysics of the *Atharva Veda* is of a mystical kind, that is to say, the conclusions are reached, not on the basis of

any rational analysis, but through inspired visions of a religious spiritual kind. While adopting the speculations presented by RV verses (RV 10.129, 10.190, 10.82, etc.), referred to in the preceding chapter, the Atharva Veda develops them further in dispersed verses and hymns, and in very cryptic language, making of the whole doctrine a mystery, which is very difficult to fathom. However, there are about 19 hymns dealing principally with this subject. This makes it unnecessary to wade through and pick up concepts lying in other hymns and dispersed verses. Nevertheless, the task of unravelling the mysteries embalmed in these 19 hymns is not the less easy on that account. Every line and verse is a riddle expressed in codes, made the more difficult of interpretation by the fact that the codes employed to express an idea vary even in the same verse. There is a sudden and frequent shift from cypher to cypher in every line.

The 19 hymns are II.1, and 2, IV. 1, V.1 and 2, VII.1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, VIII.9 and 10, IX.2, 4, 9 and 10, and X.7 and 8. They will be discussed in detail in a subsequent chapter, where quotations from, or references to, relevant verses will be provided as authority for the views on the subject. Here, I shall give only a brief summary of the essential points as follows :

(1) Whereas the RV describes the origin and structure of the Universe in abstract terms, such as *ekam* (the One), *kāma* (desire), *manas* (mind), *tapas* (heat), and so on, the AV expresses them in concrete forms, endowing the relevant deva power with an almost human personality in many cases. Thus, the '*ekam*' of the Rg Veda becomes Vena, or the Gandharva Viśvāvasu who, as I have shown in my '*Rg Vedic Studies*', is only another aspect of Rudra-Śiva ; similarly '*desire*' (*kāma*) becomes personified as an aspect of Agni (or Rudra-Śiva) under the name *Kāma* ; again '*tapas*' (heat in RV) becomes an act (*tapas*) of religious austerity. The '*pillar of fire*' of the RV comes to life as '*Skambha*', a power of the front rank, who appears often as a personality with the characteristics of a deva ; the somewhat impersonal, and indirectly referred to, '*Śakti*' of the Rg Veda, becomes an androgynous '*Virāj*', the creator and motivator of the universe.

(2) The ultimate in this process of concretization of concepts and of endowing them with a personality, is reached when dealing,

with the universe taken as a whole. Here as, elsewhere, the AV is taking, to the logical end, processes whose beginnings are visible in the RV also. For example, the latter talks of 'dyau' (sky) as father and pṛthvi (earth) as mother, of the sun as eye, of the stars as spies of Varuna, of the flames of fire as the tongue of Agni, and so on in a metaphorical way, but the universe as a whole is not concretized or personalized even in a metaphorical sense. It is in the concept of 'puruṣa' that it (the RV) comes nearest to doing so, but the unity that is seen there is the unit of 'embodied spirit'; the puruṣa is not a body but a spirit. The Atharva Veda, on the other hand, at one sweep gives to the whole universe a human shape and form under the name 'brahman'. This is in effect to provide a body, a 'prakṛti', to the 'puruṣa', and make of the whole a 'Brahman', which is undoubtedly the precursor to the later concepts of Brahman as the Absolute of, for example, the Vedānta and Brahmā of the Purāṇas.

(3) *Brahman* :

A distinguishing mark is necessary to identify in what sense the word 'brahman' is used in the various passages of the Atharva Veda and in this work they will be distinguished in the following manner :

- (1) Brahman — the Universe seen in the shape of a (with a capital B) human body, and possessing all the attributes, corporeal, mental, intellectual, psychological, spiritual, etc., of a human being ;
- (2) brahmin — the individual of the 'brahman' priesthood, distinguished from the brahmā priest, the supervisor of the yajna ;
- (3) brahma vidyā — the totality of knowledge and practices imparted by the Atharva Veda ;
- (4) brahman — the power (Śakti) possessed by Brahman, initially the treasured possession of the brahmā priest of the yajna.

(Atharvan), but later transferred to all brahmins, when fully inducted into the 'brahma-vidyā'.

(Note 1 : The Atharva Veda refers to its Brahman as the chief or leading or first brahmin.

Note 2 : All these are not just symbols or metaphors but are seen as realities in the same way as a human being, for example, is a reality to us).

(4) *Man (the microcosm) and Rudra-Siva (the Macrocosm) :*

The Atharva Vedic view of the Universe as a living human being—even if it be of a superior sort—has led to very many important results, not only in matters of abstract concepts, but also of religious and secular beliefs and practices.

The immediate result is to establish a correspondence between man and the universe. The latter has become a magnified image of the former. There is a one-for-one relationship between the two; every bit and piece of man's anatomy, physiology, psychosomatic state, and even the senses and consciousness, including the sub-conscious, is found reflected in the Brahman of the universe. Correspondingly, the devas and devis have come down to reside in man discharging the same functions here as they do in the larger universal field as described in the Rg Veda. Thus man has in him in a potential way, all the powers and splendour of the universe; though mortal he is in a position to attain immortality; though bound down in time, space and knowledge, he can break through all these fetters. The Atharva Veda tells him how he can do this.

Mythology :

There is very little of the complex web of the Rg Vedic myths to be seen in the Atharva Veda. Many of the devas do find passing reference, and occasionally their exploits are also taken note of. But by and large they appear reduced in power and importance. The exceptions are Agni, Indra, Mitra and Varuṇa, and above all Rudra. The Aśvins and the Maruts do have an important role to play, but not so Pūṣan, Tvastṛ, Dhātṛ, and a few others who also make an appearance. Soma is assigned a very important role, principally in the role of a bliss-giving and immortality-conferring

liquid. Its function as a plant is very much subdued, if not totally ignored, and in its place appears a material or power, generated by the psycho-somatic mechanism.

Indra, in his capacity of lord of might and of physical prowess, represents the corporeal aspect, including the senses, of man's existence. The body itself, in the aspect of its outer covering, namely 'rūpa' and 'nāma' is, represented as a garment woven in the atmosphere by maidens at the instance of Varuṇa, and descending therefrom to enclose the embryo (Agni's 'retas') in the womb. This 'retas' is the 'garbha' and carries with it the 'ātman' or the individual self of the human being. The union between the two, namely 'ātman' and the corporeal body (garment) is talked of as Varuṇa's bondage. (Āgas is usually, but wrongly, translated in the English language as sin, thereby completely destroying the nature of the concept in the native culture). It is from this bondage that man prays constantly in the Vedas to be freed so that he, that is to say, his ātman, may attain immortality ('Stand "anāgas" before Aditi' as the Rg Veda puts it).

(1) *Bondage (to Varuṇa)*

In the Rg, Yajur and Sama Vedas, this freedom from human bondage (anāgas) is sought to be attained through prayers and sacrificial rituals, depending, therefore, finally, if not totally, on the devas' gracious acceptance of the rituals. The Atharva Veda, on the contrary, makes the success of this objective entirely dependant on man's own efforts through the brahma-vidyā; no devas are required as intermediaries; it is only Rudra-Śiva, who is called into the scene, and that too because he is the repository of the brahma-vidyā, having attained that status by pursuing the same set of instructions prescribed by this very brahma-vidyā. This makes him, that is to say, Rudra-Śiva, the first and chief brahmin, under whose tutelage, the mortal brahmins are inducted into this 'vidyā' to become as brahmācārins, not just disciples of Rudra-Śiva, but so many Rudra-Śivas themselves. Here, there is no 'avatār', or coming down of devas in human form, but 'ārohana' or ascent of human beings into godhood, a reverse process.

(2) *Brahma-Vidyā (One aspect) :*

Consideration of the various aspects and details of the brahma-

vidyā has to be postponed to later parts of this book. One of the principal aspects must, however, be touched here, though only briefly.

The principal 'ritual'—if it may be called that—of the brahma-vidyā is 'tapas' which takes the place of the 'yajna', and which it resembles in every particular. The 'yajna' is a ritual in which man is only the yajamān (the observer), and a priest is required as an intermediary; the objects of sacrifice, the means, namely fire and soma, and the receivers of sacrifice are all exterior to himself. In the 'tapas', however, the sacrificer, the objects of sacrifice, the means (instruments) of sacrifice and the receivers of the sacrifice are all man himself; in the macrocosm the tapasvin is Rudra-Śiva and in the smaller scale it is the individual who is the microcosm. The end and purpose of yajna and tapas, as indeed the aspiration of all religions, all sciences and all civilisations and culture, remain the same, namely immortality and power (Śakti in her various forms).

Anatomy, Physiology and Psychology :

The Atharva Veda provides a human bio-existence to the Universe, as Rudra-Śiva. It achieves a homology between man and the universe by first of all seating the former in the yogic padmāsana posture; the universe is placed in the same posture, and here, it is Rudra-Śiva who as the chief brahmin is the Universe in its totality; this is not a symbol or metaphor, but a reality. The one-to-one correspondence between the two is established as far as anatomy and physiology are concerned according to the formulae shown in the following table; (Note : It must be made perfectly clear that while the Atharva Veda's view of human anatomy coincides more or less with that of medical science of today, this is not the case with matters of physiology. Here, the two views, namely that of the AV and of modern science, do coincide here and there, as for example the breathing process, the flow of blood and so on, but there is a total basic difference between the two in their respective approaches to this subject. The AV sees man's physiology not as delineated in gross terms by science, but as made up of more subtle elements; for example, nādis whose existence cannot be verified by scientific tools, but only by means of yogic experimentation, are not the same as the nerves of modern medicine).

*Man the microcosm.**Rudra-Śiva the macrocosm.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Legs and feet in padmāsana posture (also the sexual organs).</p> <p>2. The spinal column including the vertebrae.</p> <p>3. The neck, the shoulders and the arms.</p> <p>4. The mouth, nose, ears, eyes, etc., being parts of the face.</p> <p>5. The cranium which encloses the brain.</p> <p>6. The ātman, the real self of the human being, who is the charioteer of the body viewed as a chariot.</p> | <p>Bhūmi or pṛthvi as the earth (the Yoni). (The sexual organs cluster round this yoni).</p> <p>The 'pillar of fire', or 'skambha' which supports the sky above the earth. (The 'pillar of fire' runs from the 'yoni' of the universe upto the base of the sky, through the antarikṣa. It is the 'linga').</p> <p>The portion of the 'skambha' which lies immediately below the sky.</p> <p>The sky where move the sun, the moon and the stars. (Here, Mitra-Varuṇa and the Aśvins operate.).</p> <p>The region above the sky, where the immortals, namely the devas reside, the various parts of the brain being the devas themselves. (Here are Aditi, Vāc, Tvaṣṭṛ, Soma, Viṣṇu and so on, and principally, it is the resting ground of Agni, who, however, is constantly on the move. This is the residence of Tvaṣṭṛ or Prajāpati, or Brahmā (later).</p> <p>Rudra-Śiva, the chief brāhmin, is the self (or soul) of the universe.</p> |
|---|--|

*Man the microcosm.**Rudra-Śiva the macrocosm.*

7. Breathing, in all its details of equipment such as the nādis, the inhalation, exhalation, retention of air in the body, etc. While it is air that is breathed in and out, it circulates in the body through the nādis which are under the control of the sun and the moon. There are also cakras which act as so many centres from which active forces radiate to the various parts of the body. The entire mechanism and process are invisible to the human eye.

The winds, Vāta and Vāyu, the sun and the moon, and the passage of these two latter bodies correspond to the human breathing, etc.

8. Life is manifested in the human being by pulsations and sound vibrations of various kinds, generating heat in the process.

The universe, or rather Rudra-Śiva, also manifests these phenomena.

9. The human being exhibits a variety of passions, both good and bad, and a desire for many things, sexual and non-sexual. In fact, man is not complete until the two opposites are reconciled and in the matter of sex, this means he must unite with the female who constantly renews his energy. (The vāmacāra emphasizes this particularly).

So also does Rudra-Śiva which is the cause of his manifesting good and bad traits, and he has a Prakṛti (or Pārvati) as his eternal mate from whom he draws his energy. But as the Lord, Iśvara, he is in control and is not subordinate to all these factors.

10. Man possess a developed consciousness. This operates at various levels, starting from the sensory, and passing through the perceptive and the apperceptive to the conative and the cognitive.

In every one of these details, Rudra-Śiva or the Universe resembles the human being.

*Man the microcosm.**Rudra-Śiva the macrocosm.*

In this process, various levels of the sub-conscious are also developed. The final state of absolute knowledge is where 'the knowledge of the object and the object of the knowledge become one', and the distinction between the subject and object vanish.

11. The final objective of human life is immortality and the absolute bliss that goes with it.

Rudra-Śiva has already achieved this.

12. Before attaining immortality; man undergoes a series of births, death and re-births, and even in one single life he experiences rhythmic changes. This is to say, man till he attains immortality is ruled by Kāla, Time.

The Universe as Rudra-Śiva is also subject to such rhythmic and periodical changes under the power of Kāla, Time. Rudra-Śiva, however, as the Īśvara (or Lord) is himself Kāla.

13. Man achieves this supreme objective of his through tapas, that is Yoga and Tantrism.

Rudra-Śiva is the model on which man bases his own tapas. He brought the world into existence, sustains it and will finally bring it to an end through the tapas which he conducts both physically and mentally.

(The term 'tantrism' is nowhere rigidly defined. In this work, I am using it only as yoga in its most developed stage. However, the presence of a divine female principle of Śakti is an essential constituent of tantrism only of the left-handed category. In my present work also, this concept is observed when speaking of tantrism.).

These are the concepts that constitute the core of the text; they are at the centre from which many secondary aspects, such as

marriage, and death ceremonies, details of studentship and so on, flow. Once the central principles are grasped, the logic underlying all the others readily falls into an understandable pattern. They will form the subject matter of later chapters.

Those who know something about the nature of Hindu thought will readily recognize, in my description of the core concepts of the Atharva Veda, the elements that make up, in a more refined and systematic form, the Sāṅkhya-Yoga philosophy and the tantric practices known to us more intimately from works of later times. What is lacking in sophistication in the Atharva Veda is made up by the wide range of its coverage of the varieties of yoga that in later times have been split up into different systems as Hinduism. (Upaniṣadic, yogic, bhakti, etc.), Buddhism and Jainism. It is the Atharva Veda which provided inspiration for the various sub-sections under Hinduism known as daksinacāra and vāmacāra, or as orthodox yoga (of Patanjali) and the unorthodox sādhus, and ascetics practising extreme forms of austerities. The Āgamas, temple worship, bhakti, etc. all have evolved out of roots which lie deeply embedded in the Atharva Veda. Within the orthodox Hindu sects, a variety of saṃskāras have developed, all having as their base, principles belonging to tantric schools. The Atharva Veda has already laid the foundations necessary for the evolution of āgamic forms of worship from the tantras, and also for the sectarian division of Hinduism into Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, and Śakti cults.

Whereas the Atharva Veda mode of thinking belongs to the Sāṅkhya Yoga school, the Rg Veda inclines towards some—and only some—aspects of Vedānta, though no clear-cut distinction can be made between the two. In addition, the Rg Veda provides a ready-made and finished primer for Vedānta, whereas the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system of thought has to be hewed out of the Atharva Veda, eschewing in the process many valuable ideas and practices which have found refuge in the so-called non-orthodox schools of Buddhism, Jainism, Ājīvika, Cārvāka and so on.

I now face the most arduous part of this work. Having shown a glimpse of what lies at the esoteric core of the Atharva Veda, I have now to show how the camouflage which enshrouds it has become so dense and difficult of penetration. And even more

arduous is the task—for reasons which will become clear—of demonstrating that the diamond, as I see it, is real and natural, and not one artificially and deceptively constructed by me.

Before closing this section, I must draw attention to the unique concept of identifying Rudra-Siva with the Universe, and attributing characteristics of the human body in the guise of the construction of the first and chief brahmin. His tapas in this form was made the proto-type of the tapas of human beings and a bridge was thus built between the microcosm, that is man, and the macrocosm, that is the Universe. What changes this concept underwent in later times in the Upaniṣads (and Vedānta) and the Purāṇas has already been mentioned by me. To this, I must add that Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra also owed its concept of Īśvara to this same source, but that his Īśvara is just a pale substitute for the Rudra-Siva. It is a measure of the obscurity into which the Atharva Veda had fallen even by the end, if not the beginning, of the Vedic age, that this, its grandest concept, should have come to be so totally ignored

HYMNS OF THE AV.

The roots of the AV lie in shamanism ; and the Atharvan priest is in culture and religion a successor to the shaman who was a fire-priest, a medicine man and a performer of extra-ordinary feats, such as fire-walking, fire-eating, sooth-saying, exorcising, so-called devil-dancing and so on. (Shamanism is the name given to a primitive religious belief which attributes all happenings in the human world to spirits who can, however, be controlled by special priests. Through this means, the shaman priest is able to work miracles. Originally, the word was used to denote a special form of religion prevailing in Northern Asia, but now it has acquired the status of a common noun descriptive of all practices of this kind wherever found). It has never been clear, even to later generations, where and how the shaman derived these powers, and it has become customary to attribute it to magic. The magician is not looked upon with favour, being treated as a perpetrator of frauds or of being in league with supernatural forces, more evil than good. Some attempt is made to tone down the opprobrium by distinguishing between 'black' and 'white' magic, based purely upon the presumed intentions of the magician and his bene-

ficiaries. If the intention is principally to cause harm to others, it is deemed to be black, but if it is only to earn benefits, it is classified as white. In practice, however, no such distinction is possible.

All religions have evolved out of shamanism of some kind or other, but with the advance of civilisation, continuous attempts have been made everywhere to eliminate magical practices, and also the ways of thought that would support magic. It cannot be said, however, that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, the so-called advanced religions are really improvements upon the earlier shamanisms. Beneath the superficial veneer of civilised religious behaviour and thought, man still harbours within himself the spirit of his shaman forbears. Prophets, saints, reformers and founders of modern religions have struggled in vain to change the basic character of man. All that they have succeeded in doing is to eliminate the forms of linguistic expression and the more obvious behavioural characteristics that are associated with shamans and shamanism. Mankind in general, is, and it may be safely predicted for the future that it will be, at heart attached to and attracted by shamanism.

The great religions have succeeded in eliminating from their vocabulary shamanistic expressions, and from their rituals and their institutions such of the elements whose source can easily be traced to shamanism. This success has been achieved at a cost in terms of human blood and human suffering that far exceeds anything that can be attributed to the so-called primitive magical religions.

But there is one line of religious evolution which is an exception to this. The first signs of this appear in the text of the Atharva Veda which in course of time has generated many sects in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, wherever the Atharvan thought has evolved into yoga and tantrism. It is not on record that these religions have perpetrated any acts of barbarity on a mass scale, and with the exception of a few extreme sects of Hinduism, they have, acted as apostles of nonviolence, and have attempted to tone down such acts of inhumanity commonly noticeable elsewhere.

The Atharva Veda has evolved smoothly out of shamanism, without any attempt to cut itself off from its base which lies there. It has absorbed, assimilated and elevated to very magnificent heights

the essential elements of shamanism without making any attempts to cut its umbilical cords. Consequently, it has retained the language, idiom and style of language of the shaman. On the face of it, the text reads as if it is all magical formulae concocted by the shaman medicine man. In reality beneath this facade are secreted the basic principles of yoga and tantrism and their application in individual and social life. This becomes apparent when the codes which appear in the form of similes, metaphors, symbols, double entendres, and images are deciphered. There is a system and a pattern in the construction of these codes, and once one or two of the codes are broken the rest follow easily. With the exception of a few of the more difficult hymns, the rest are all found to submit themselves easily to this analytical method. Those few that remain obstinately unamenable to this treatment must, for the time being at least, be assumed to be nothing, but simple carry-over of pure magical formulae from their shamanic ancestry.

The pall of ill-fame that hangs over the AV text as a book of magic is so dense that it will require tomes of explanatory notes, commentaries and translations to remove it completely. Considering the size and complexity of the text, an exercise of this nature calls for resources beyond my disposal. In any case, it cannot be handled in a brief and introductory work such as the present one. I shall, therefore, have to restrict the scope of this study to an examination of some special aspects of the hymns only, and to the more fundamental codes of symbols and images contained therein.

CHAPTER III

TEXTUAL PROBLEMS.

Stripped of its myths and symbols, the true nature of the Atharva Veda is revealed as a work of Yoga and Tantrism.

The manner in which this Veda uses myths, symbols and words will be examined at length elsewhere in this book. Only the methodology adopted and the conclusions reached in the present study will be presented in this chapter. A complete translation of the text and a detailed commentary would quite obviously have provided the soundest argument for the conclusions reached, but unfortunately various constraints, including space, have stood in the way of their being included in this work. It is hoped that it may be possible to bring forth at a later time an exhaustive study of this nature. Meanwhile, for the present purpose, all that can be provided, in the various chapters that follow, are commentaries on the major noteworthy points of importance in the hymns and verses of the several individual books that hold the key to the secrets of the text. This is the minimum that is necessary to justify the conclusions reached, and provides an example of the vast amount of material evidence that can be produced as arguments in support of the new interpretation.

In this study, only the first 18 books are reviewed out of the 20 which the text is thought to be made up of. Scholars have pointed out that the last two are of late origin. They have not been included in this study on that account, only with a view to avoid criticisms that may give rise to the conclusions as not being true to the original Atharva Vedic thought. One exception has, however, been made to this rule by including Hymn No. 42 of Book XIX, to which Whitney has given the title, 'Extolling the brahman, etc.'. It is of a very general nature, merely bringing together in one place several characteristics of 'brahman' which are to be found scattered in various passages of the first 18 books. It introduces no new element which is not covered in those books. Its inclusion in this discussion is only on the grounds of convenience as it clarifies the different shades of meaning of the term 'brahman' in the text.

The textual passages on which the new interpretation is based are indicated in the usual manner by quoting the number of the book, (in Roman letters followed by those of the hymn and the verse in Arabics). In addition, a reference is provided wherever necessary to the Chapter No. (in Roman) of this work, where the arguments in support of the conclusion are to be found under the relevant hymn, whose number is also indicated.

The first difficulty encountered in reading the text is the uncertainty about the correctness of the words and phrases, due to the lack of care in ensuring the purity of the original material. Added to this is the large number of words which sound out-landish and show clear evidence of being drawn from non-Sanskritic environment without any attempt having been made to Sanskritize them. It appears that very often one has to read between the lines, a problem which was not, quite obviously, encountered when the text was in practical use through oral teaching. By means of practical demonstration and personal elucidation the guru, or ācārya as the AV calls him, must have cleared all doubts and difficulties.

To a large extent the lacunae and shortcomings of the textual material have been obviated by the skill with which they have been handled in Whitney's edition.

The greatest hurdle in reading the text is posed by the symbols and myths. Not only are they extensive in number but are also very complex and intricate in nature. The habit of using the same symbol for varying concepts, as for example, the cow, adds to these difficulties. With such skill is the material composed that one easily falls into the trap of not suspecting the existence of an underlying symbolism and of reading the passages literally only. Moreover, the passages very often can be read at various levels of symbolism.

Added to all this is the poetic art and use of imagery characteristic of the Vedic compositions, the peculiar nature of which is very often missed even by learned critics. This is especially the case where assonance is in question. Love of assonance is a typical characteristic of Sanskrit works in general, but in the Vedas, it is carried to the extreme where it leads to a twisting of the words out of their ordinary meaning and even to the sacrifice of meaning.

My plan is to examine in the next chapter the text subject-wise, to the extent that the tantric elements are present therein. While all the first eighteen Books will be covered in this chapter, it is only the last six that will be dealt with in some detail here. The remaining, namely the first twelve, will be examined in greater detail in the next following chapter, namely chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

' SUBJECT-WISE READING OF THE TEXT '.

SECTION 1

THE VRĀTYA HYMN (BOOK XV).

The Vrātya Hymn which takes up the whole of Book XV serves very well as an opening gambit in the search for an entry into the esoteric side of the text. There are some peculiar aspects about this hymn which almost mechanically draws attention to it in this effort. There is neither sorcery nor medical prescription here and even the language is very simple. It sounds more or less as a direct narration, and even the symbols, of which no doubt there is quite a good number, are quite easy to penetrate. There is so much air of realism about it that one would be quite justified in reading some history of religion and cult into it. As Whitney himself has shown in his brief introduction to Book XV in his work, the Vrātya (ekavrātya) is to be recognised as a form of the Absolute Brahman, taking shape as Rudra. The important points that emerge are highlighted as follows :

1. The Vrātya (Ekavrātya) is Rudra, the shape taken by the Absolute Over-soul or Brahman; the power of brahman (or soul) has entered into and taken the shape of Rudra as Vrātya ;
2. The Vrātya is an ascetic or rather tapasvin, and it is by this means that he has acquired the brahman power (virāj) ;
3. The brahman power manifests itself in various forms as 'kāma' (or the primeval Desire which entering into Prajāpati creates the manifested world of shapes and forms), or as 'kāla' (time), or as consciousness (or Knowledge) or as space (dīśah), or as breath (prāṇa etc.), or as individual soul atman, or as speech or as holiness (brahman represented by Bṛhaspati and the brahmīns), or as kṣattrā (royal power, represented by the rājanya), etc. ;

4. The tapas of the Vrātya is a yogic exercise of the nature of tantrism; the presence of dancers and musicians indicate that it is of a type analogous to the vāmacāra' sects; he is a follower (or rather the founder) of the principles to which that sect is attached, namely that the ultimate conquest of the senses lies in the tapasvin allowing free play to their activity without himself desiring, or drawing, any enjoyment therefrom, being above and beyond all sensual pleasures;
5. The Ekavrātya is, in one sense, Rudra come down as a human being and in another a human being who has attained the superhuman status. That is to say, there is both avarohana (descent) and ārohana (ascent) here. The description of Ekavrātya in human terms as breathing, performing āsanās, and tapas, possessing eyes (sun and moon), ears (fire and wind), nostrils (day and night), skulls (two halves, Diti and Aditi), head (year), etc., is intended to present a picture of the Universe as being Rudra (in human shape and form) in tapas; we are required to place in juxtaposition man (the microcosm) and the Universe as Rudra (the macrocosm), both being immersed in a tapas which leads to the two being absorbed into one another. The main purpose of presenting a one-to-one correspondence (homology) between the two is just this.
6. The repeated refrain, namely, 'he who knows' (ya evam veda) which has a Upaniṣadic ring about it makes it clear that the object of the tapas is acquisition of 'vidyā' (knowledge), leading to the transformation of the individual into a divine being (Rudra), with whom he becomes one. **THIS IS 'BRAHMA-VIDYĀ'.**

From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that there is something unique about this hymn, as also that of the next one, namely hymn No. XVI, which resembles it in many respects. (The contents of hymn XVI will be discussed later; for the present I shall have to content myself with the remark that it is, in a sense, a continuation of the previous one. Whereas the earlier hymn deals with the ekavrātya, that is Rudra, and the tapasvins who have so

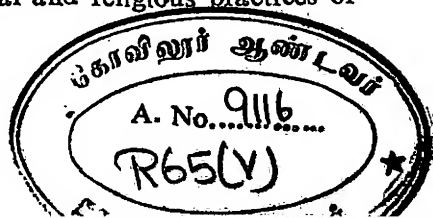
far advanced in their tapas as to become Rudras themselves, hymn number XVI deals with the 'studentship' of the novitiate, or as he is termed in the text, the 'brahmacārin').

These two hymns provide the key to the symbolisms that pervades the rest of the textual material or at least the major aspects of them. But before going into this matter further, it would be useful to see what conclusions can be drawn from the unique nature of these two hymns.

It would appear from hymn XV that the basic concepts of ascetism, namely tapas and yoga, stem from the Vrātyas of Magadha, who are loosely held groups or wandering bands, with little of social organisation and not amenable to any social discipline. If yajna or sacrifice is to be deemed to be a sign of Vedic culture, this is not Vedism. With their claim to possess supernatural powers (actually they claim to be Rudras), they were able to dominate royalty, and even exercise intellectual domination over the sacrifice-practising Vedic society. The latter were so captivated by the cult that the Vrātyas were admitted into their fold through special rites known as Vrātya stomas, of which full descriptions are available in the kalpa sūtras.

The entry of the Vrātyas into the society practising yajna rituals has had a traumatic effect on the latter. The process itself may be referred to as 'brahmanising' the Vrātya cult, for while the term 'virāj' was initially in the AV applied to the basic Power which was brought into play through the tapas, this was changed into brahman in the AV itself after the absorption of the cult by the Vedic society. Actually, this statement does not fully and correctly bring out the inter-relationship between the tapas cult and the yajna cult, which is much more intricate and complex. This will be discussed separately in detail elsewhere in this work. (The syllable brh- is a cognate of vr-, or vir- of viraj and virāt, or vrāt).

For the present, attention will be focussed on the various steps by which the 'brahmanisation' of the tapas cult was achieved and its ultimate outcome in the social and religious practices of the Vedic Society.



SECTION 2.

Brahmanising the Tapas Cult :

The first signs of the effect of this process of brahmanising of the tapas cult can be seen in this hymn, and there they go on the lines indicated below :

Paryāyas 1, 2 and 5 describe the principal elements of the early stages of brahmācārī's studies, consisting of purification (with the aid of fire and water), prayer for the acquisition of 'knowledge' and avoidance of sloth. The unsophisticated nature of these elements show their existence even before the brahmanising activity.

Paryāyas 3, 4 6 and 7 are prayers for various gifts, including immortality, which are the objects of the tapas. Bṛhaspati, the Angirasa, makes his appearance here, and it is clear that he is the symbol of the brahmanisation process. (Bṛhaspati's role as the acknowledged leader of the brahmin community has already been pointed out by me in my ' Rg Vedic Studies '). However, as far as these specific elements are concerned, his induction does not seem to have made any substantial change.

Paryāyas 8 and 9 'resound with a sense of triumph and success in achievement.'

While on this subject, it would prove instructive to extend the discussion to cover certain related topics, namely virāj, brahman, Rudra, and their role in 'brahmanizing' non-brahmanic cults.

Brahman and Virāj :

Hymn VIII. 10 describes the activities of 'virāj' in terms which are not very different from what are said about the 'sole' Vṛātya in paryāyas 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of Book XV. It is also important to note that in the former verses, the refrain, 'he who knoweth thus', (ya evam veda) runs as ubiquitously as in the latter. Very significant are the assertions found in verse 14.9 that 'virāj' is the 'food-eater' (of the Vṛātya), and that 'he who knoweth thus (has) 'virāj' as 'food-eater'. This should be compared with paryāya VI of hymn VIII.10, dealing with virāj, which also stresses the importance of the manner in which food is partaken. 'Food'

here must be understood as a symbol for generation of power, from which we may conclude that virāj is the power (Śakti) of the Vrātya.

When we turn to verse VIII.10.1, we find that “‘ virāj’ verily was this universe in the beginning; of her when born, everything was afraid, thinking, ‘this one indeed will become the universe’”, which may be compared with the first paryāya of Book XV, where this role is ascribed to the Vrātya. And just as the Vrātya became the one (verses 3 and 6 of paryāya 1 of Book XV), so also Virāj is ‘the sole ox, the sole seer, sole yakṣa, etc.’ in Verse VIII.9.26. In the preceding verse, namely verse VIII.9.25, the virāj is said to be the abode, and the sole (ekavṛt) yakṣa on earth, and correspondingly throughout Book XV, the sole Vrātya is also said to be the abode (dhāman). Actually, Hymn VIII.9 ascribes to virāj all the powers necessary for the Vrātya to be what he is in Book XV. Thus, it would appear that ‘virāj’ is the power, the Śakti as it were, of the sole Vrātya, who is Rudra.

In this connection, RV X.90.5 may also be seen; there Virāj and Puruṣa are said to be born from each other alternately. Simultaneously, the concept of brahman as the supreme Power (Śakti) ruling the Universe, with Brahman as the Universal soul, is inducted into the Aharva Veda. This is a major step towards ‘brahmanizing’ the non-brahmanic, that is, the Vrātya and Rudra tapasic, cults. Both these two aspects of brahman, that is, as the Universal soul as well as the all-sustaining power are emphasized in no uncertain terms in hymn XIX.42.

Hymn XIX.42 :

The hymn XIX.42 reads as follows :

1. The brahman is the (i) invoker (hotṛ), (ii) the sacrifice, (iii) the sacrificial posts, (iv) generator of adhvaryu, the officiating priest, and (v) container of the oblation.
2. (a) The brahman is the sacrificial spoon filled with ghee ; (b) by the brahman is the sacrificial hearth set up ; (c) the brahman is the essence (tattva) of the sacrifice—the priests that are the oblation-makers, are the victim’s immolators.

3. To him who frees from distress, I bring forward my devotion, unto him who rescues well, choosing myself his favour, accept, O Indra, this oblation; let the desires of the sacrificer be realized.
4. Him who frees from distress, the bull of the worshipful, him that shines forth (virāj), the first of the sacrifices (adhvara), the child of the Waters, O Ásvins, I call with prayer (dhi); do ye with Indra give me Indra-like force.

Thus even in the *Vrātya* hymn (Bk. XV), brahman is found sharing these functions both of Rudra and of viraj in 1.3; 3, 7, 6, 8, etc. It is interesting to compare this with some of the statements that appear in the *Virāj* hymns, namely VIII.9 and VIII.10. In verse 3 of the former, brahman (priest) is said to attain her through tapas, and she is 'an inspired one, and she that is One (ekam) is joined with the One.' In verse 7 of the same, 'virāj is said to be the father (the change in gender is to be noticed) of brahman', and the request is made to Kaśyapa,—the sun (very significantly) —to 'distribute it' to the suppliants, who are his (the sun's) worshippers. In verse 25 of hymn VIII.10, she is said to be 'rich in brahman'. Further cases of this nature can be noticed scattered in various other hymns, but these examples should be sufficient to establish the subtle process by which this 'brahmanizing' transformation has been effected.

Hymn X.2 demonstrates the final stage of completion of the 'brahmanizing' process, besides setting up a homology (one-for-one correspondence between man (the microcosm) and the Universe, the Macrocosm, appearing as Man, the Puruṣa (in the *Rg Veda*, in place of or as an alternative version of Rudra). In addition, we are introduced here to Atharvan (verses 26 and 27) as the primeval tapasvin who had reached the stage of Absolute Bliss by having poured soma into his head, 'where the gods dwell', which is what is claimed to happen in tantrism when samādhi is attained. As far as 'brahman' is concerned the word appears at least 7 times in verses 21, 23, 25, 28, 29, 32 and 33, whereas there is no reference to virāj at all. A variety of qualities are attributed to brahman in this hymn, ranging all the way from the Absolute to the Power that subsumes the Universe, the Creator who is activated by it, the brahmins, and ultimately, the Supreme knowledge known as

brahman (brahma-vidyā), that unifies man (the microcosm) with Puruṣa (or Rudra) (the Macrocosmic Universe seen in anthropomorphic terms).

SECTION 3

BRAHMACĀRIN.

How can man, simple ordinary man, attain god-hood (the objective is god-hood itself, not just approaching god-head), even while he is alive in this world? The first answer to this question is provided in this work by the Vrātya cult. (Actually, the Atharva Veda itself provides indirect evidence for the inference that the Vrātya cult had emerged from a very much earlier 'shamanic' religion, about which further information will be found elsewhere in this work.).

The path according to the Vrātya cult is simple : abandonment of rituals and social connections, and fixed abode, reducing clothing to the minimum, having bards and women for company, practising breath control, and āsana postures, and severe but simple tapas, such as standing erect for years. Quite obviously non-religious meditation was also prescribed, and simple initiation by a teacher was necessary. The ultimate objective, though called knowledge (vidyā), was a purely practical one, namely merging with the Absolute. Also some super-normal powers, such as rising above the ground, were developed through this yoga. Whether such powers were actually manifested or not, the habits and modes of living were simple.

As pointed out earlier, Book XVI gives further details of the simple forms of initiation which the Vrātyas had to undergo before becoming full-fledged members.

In contrast, brahmanization made initiation a very elaborate affair with the teacher (ācārya) playing an important part, ('The ācārya bears the brahmacārin in his belly for three nights' vide verse number XI.5.). Besides being referred to in various scattered verses in greater detail, the text carries one whole hymn, namely XI.5 devoted to this subject. Through breath exercise and tapas the brahmacārin becomes the chief brahman, an immortal more powerful than the devas (verse 5, for example); in fact, he becomes

a veritable Rudra (verse 26), the homologization between the cosmic and microcosmic tapas being emphasized in detail. Hymn XI.4, the preceding hymn, glorifies the breathing exercises of yoga in very unambiguous language as providing the pathway to immortality and god-hood. Here, we must revert again to hymn XI.8, certain elements of which have already been discussed earlier. Its other aspects may now be examined.

Hymns X.2 and XI.8 must be read together, the subject matter of both being the same, namely the structure and spirit of man, his anatomy and physiology, how the parts came into being, what devas preside over them, and how by tapas and meditation on these parts and the devas concerned, he may, through concentration and meditation in tapas, realise the true nature of himself, and achieve the ultimate brahman power which is the object of the brahma-vidyā. This is the sort of exercise which in later tantric and yogic schools is termed 'nyāsa'.

There is one aspect which in the brahmanized version assumes extra-ordinary importance, far greater than what is assigned to it in the Vrātya cult, namely the sacred cord of the twice-born. It is called 'tantu' and 'tiryaś' in verse XV.3.6. and not much is made of it there. But in the brahmanized tapas of hymn IX.1, where it is called, 'madhu kaśa' (translated by Whitney as 'honey-whip' without realising the symbolic nature of the expression, which I have explained in full later on in this work), it is endowed with supernatural powers. (Vide notes on hymn IX.1 at Chapter XIV of this work). It has, in fact even in the AV itself, become the symbol of distinction between the dvi-jas (principally the brahmins) and others in the community, thus serving to draw a firm and uncrossable line between the elect and the base sūdras and out-castes.

The Vrātya cult, whatever its faults and shortcomings, of which it has indeed quite a large number, had at least one redeeming feature. It was thoroughly democratic, in that it made no caste or other social distinction between the members, and all men had equal entry to its paths of salvation. By a strange piece of irony, it is this cult which, when 'brahmanized', seems to have provided the strongest mechanism for creating such distinctions, leading ultimately to an impregnable wall of communal separation.

This is made abundantly clear in three whole hymns (besides scattered verses elsewhere), namely hymns numbers X.10 and XII.4 and 5, which talk of a 'vaśā' as being a special and treasured possession of the brahmins who only could have access to it.

What is this 'vaśā'? It is translated by all commentators as 'cow', and with some justification considering the description of certain physical characteristics, such as tail, hoof, etc. However, at the same time in even more passages of these hymns the word cannot by any means be treated as signifying the animal 'cow'; for example, verses XII.5.1 to 4 say, 'she was created by toil and holy fervour (tapas), found by devotion, resting in right (ṛta); invested with truth, surrounded with honour, compassed about with glory; girt round with inherent power, fortified with faith, protected by consecration, installed at sacrifice, the world her resting place; brahma her guide, and the brahmin her lord and ruler.' It is quite obvious that this 'vaśā' cow is just a symbol, resembling the cow which is the symbolic name of Aditi and Vāk. Consequently the vaśā of these verses can only be the brahman power, the mantra, of brahma-vidyā.

In reality what is intended in these verses is to extol the brahma-vidyā, extol its powers, and reserve its acquisition to the brahmins. This by itself would have been sufficient to preserve for that community the extra-ordinary privileges which are endowed on them in these verses. But, concretisation of this abstract concept into the form of the animal cow has given it an indestructible reality which has withstood any kind of erosion for over 3000 years.

SECTION 4

RUDRA-ŚIVA.

The Rudra of the Atharva Veda is really Rudra-Śiva for he manifests both benefic and malefic powers.

The attributes of Rudra, the Vrātya, remained unaffected by the brahmanization of the cult though the name Vrātya itself was totally banished. Rudra ceased to be a Vrātya, but he remained a tapasvin, though with profound modifications in his characteristics. The musicians and harlots were banished, and his wandering

propensities were considerably toned down. 'Brahmanization' meant socialization, an important element of which is marriage and production of children. The brahmanized Rudra had to submit to these requirements, subject to the condition, however, that the human Rudras were permitted to enjoy the same uninhibited promiscuity as the cosmic counterpart. A fact which is forgotten too frequently is that tapas and asceticism in the Hindu and Vedic context do not always mean complete sexual, or for that matter total, sensual abstinence. Some sects, and some individuals, might voluntarily adopt such a way of life, but rejection of sex is not a necessary condition of holiness. On the contrary, in many sects every opportunity was provided to 'holy' men to indulge in promiscuous sex on the principle that a widespread casting of the holy seed is an act of social and religious service. The Vedic theory, which has been inherited by Hinduism is that every Rudraic brahmacārin (which term in later times was made applicable to every brahmin) was an Agni, and the Vedas assure us that all generative seed on the earth is the outpouring of Agni. Sexual control does not mean, therefore, sexual abstinence. It only meant that the act had to be controlled and directed, and should not lead to uncontrolled ejection.

The term brahmacārin in the Atharva Veda has a wider connotation than the corresponding brahmacāry of the Dharma Sastras and later Hindu practices. Whereas in these latter it was limited to one stage in the life of the brahmin young man, where sex was, in theory at least, taboo, in the Atharva Veda it implied what the word means literally, namely one who follows the ways of brahman or brahmā. Brahmā here stands for Rudra; at the human level it represents the brahman priest (as distinct from hotṛ, udgatr, adhvaryu, etc.). Both the cosmic and microcosmic brahmas were so called because their objective was the acquisition through tapas and yoga of that supernatural power, named brahman, which leads to immortality and divine bliss. At the same time, it confers extra-ordinary supernatural and miraculous powers in all matters including sex, and the dematerialisation of matter into spirit, and vice-versa.

Hence, after the brahmanizing process, Rudra carried over into his new environment his role as the paradigm of tapasvins exercising complete body-control through yoga and breath techni-

ques. In addition, in the Atharva Veda he possesses many other characteristics.

First of all, he is the giver and dispenser of knowledge (brahma-vidyā), of which he is the guardian. As the paradigmatic tapasvin, this falls within his authority. The symbol here is the bow and arrow, which are symbols of Speech and Vāk also, as explicitly stated in the Rg Veda.

He possesses an uncontrollable temper, which makes him inflict terrible punishment on those who despise and hate him and his followers. The symbols are the triśūl, trishandi, (often mistakenly referred to also as arrow), and snakes (Arbudi and Nyarbudi). He is a snake-charmer whose skills and art are available to the tapasyins, his followers. They are thus in a position to protect themselves from the poison of snakes and even manage them skilfully. Also, he has in his retinue fearful followers led by Bhāva and Sarva, the Maruts, his sons, and others named Rudras. The brahman mantras are his most powerful weapons.

He is the medicine man par excellence, and the symbols here are the herbs, so much so that he himself is referred to as The Plant (auśadhi or virudh, etc.). He exercises these powers not only through Soma, of which he is the master, but also through the mechanisms of body-control in yogic tapas.

As lord of Soma, he confers supreme bliss in a double sense, namely, through the soma plant's (and other plants') intoxicating power, and through the samādhi achieved at the final stages of tantric exercises.

He, as Kāma, is the creator of the sexual desire, primeval as well as ordinary, leading to the creation of life and progeny of men, animals and birds.

He is Kāla, lord of time which leads to aging and death, but at the same time, he endows immortality 'mokṣa' on men who 'know' him through tapas. Symbolically, this is referred to as being caught in his noose, which is achieved by being freed from another noose, namely that of Varuṇa. This latter is the cord that binds man to his body; the stronger is one's attachment to worldly matters the more tight becomes Varuṇa's noose. By attaching oneself to the noose of Rudra through tapas, Varuṇa's noose is made to fall away.

Rudra as Agni plays a vital part in the social life of the individual. He is the witness at the marriage, and the giver away of the bride. As garhapatya Agni he oversees all the Saṁskaras, from the pre-natal stage, through birth, godāna, first intake of food, and so on, until as the 'flesh-eating Agni' at the crematorium he reduces the dead to ashes. He is the great protector of the universe and of man. The symbol is linga; in the form of Skambha, the cosmic linga supports the heaven, the sky and the antarikṣa above the earth. He is the Father, dyau the pitā, standing over the mother, pṛthvi or bhūmi, the great mātā.

He is the creator of life. The AV adopts two different symbols to say this. Firstly, human souls (atman, as against the soul of Rudra, termed Brahman) are generated from Rudra's (Agni's) semen (fortified by Soma) and the process of birth, death and re-birth are portrayed as the seed dropping down to the ground, flying up and dropping down again in an endless series. The second symbol is drawn from the craft of weaving; six virgins are said to sit round the great skambha and pass the thread (tantu) of life as web and woof to create the various forms.

In all the cosmogonic hymns of the AV, the central figure is Rudra, as Vena (Desire) or Manyu (not passionate anger, but sexual passion) or as Viśvāvasu, the Gandharva and so on.

Finally, Rudra in tapas is the Universe, and every aspect of this tapas has a corresponding element in human tapas. The earth is the seat on which Rudra is seated in padmāsana, and it corresponds to the magical black buck skin on which the human tapasvins sit. It is the yoni. The Skambha is the back bone of Rudra, the eyes are the sun and moon, the brain is the seat of the devas, Vāta and Vāyu which blow round the upper regions of the Skambha are the breath of life, the nādis are the snakes and so on.

Such are the multifarious faces of Rudra. (The relevant verses on which these statements are based will be found in later part of this work.).

In a sense, therefore, the Atharva Veda may be said to be the Veda of Rudra-Śiva, or the Veda of Tapas, as opposed to the other three which are Vedas of Sacrifice (yajna), led by the Rg Veda. But it must not be assumed on that account that there is a

clear-cut demarcation between the Rg and Atharva Vedas. In spite of the great difference in the details and general nature of the two cults, the texts do not dissociate themselves from one another. On the contrary, they maintain a close mutual link. This is a matter which requires to be examined in detail separately.

(The relevant verses on which the above details are based will be found discussed in various later chapters of this work).

SECTION 5

YOGA, TANTRA AND ŚAKTI.

The term yoga refers to certain physical and mental disciplines which have been brought into a system by Patanjali in his 'Yoga Sutras', and it has developed a philosophy of its own. (Patanjali's is Classical Yoga which goes only part of the way of Tantra, as envisioned even in the Atharva Veda).

These concepts have become embedded as an integral part of all Hindu philosophical thought in various forms; their hold is strongest in the ascetic sects, 'tapas', being only an extreme form of yoga. Long before Patanjali, Yogic exercises, mental as well as physical, were, it is certain, in practice, though we have no textual material for the earlier periods. (that is, other than the Atharva Veda as now interpreted). It is the general prevailing opinion at present that the Vedic texts have nothing to contribute to our knowledge on the subject. Consequently, it is held that yoga must have had its origin in non-Vedic environment long after the so-called 'Vedic Age'. A correct reading of the Rg and Atharva Vedas reveals that these notions are not well founded.

As far as the Rg Veda is concerned, I have already in my 'Rg Vedic Studies', shown that 'tapas', as cult, was in vogue even among the people of those times, though the Rg Veda's attitude to it was equivocal. The Atharva Veda provides even more interesting information.

It is not necessary, or possible, to enter into a discussion on the various facets of Yoga and Tantra. For the present purpose, it is sufficient to point out that the first act is breath control, prior

to which certain preparatory steps have to be taken such as purification of mind, body and physical environment. Water is the great purifier, not only of the body, but also of the mind, drawing its powers from Agni, as I have shown in my 'Rg Vedic Studies.' It is, as one AV verse puts it, 'Rudra's Urine'. The mind is purified by freeing it of evil thoughts, such as greed, lust, hatred, etc., and concentrating it on holy, or at least morally neutral, objects. Mental and bodily exercises—depending upon the objectives of the practitioner—are necessary for further progress, and the final target is either the attainment of miraculous powers over nature, or of 'mokṣa', which is ultimate release from the bondage of life, through Knowledge and Samādhi. All these are different manifestations of Power, or Śakti, which may, therefore, be deemed to be the ultimate objective of Yoga, for once one has united (yoga) himself with Śakti, (as Śiva did in the prototype of all yogas), one has become Śiva himself.

The Atharva Veda does not spell out in plain terms all these aspects. It gives, however, clear indication of its familiarity with them, but it requires a careful analysis and correct reading of the esoterisms underlying the passages to realise this.

The first step in Yoga is breath control, and there are many passages in the A.V. mantras on this subject. A whole hymn, namely hymn XI.4 is devoted to it. Here, the importance of breath control ('I bind thee to me') is emphasized in verse 26; as verse 11 says, 'breath is death' and breath 'takman'; verse 12 goes on to say that breath is 'virāj', the ultimate directress (dēṣṭrī), Śakti, which, as Power, is worshipped by all; verse 1 makes it clear that breath is lord of all, and controls all; according to verse 20, 'he (that is breath) moves as an embryo within the divinities; having come into being, and having been, he is born again; he, having been entered with might (power) into what is to be, and what will be, (as) father (has entered) into the son.' In verse 11, breath is called 'the swan', 'haṁsa', which is very significant, since in texts which are undoubtedly yogic and tantric, this is a very familiar metaphor, and is treated as a technical term made up of 'hām' (the vibrations produced when breath is drawn in as 'prāṇa' and 'sa' when it is let out); that is to say, 'hām' + 'sa' equals 'haṁsa', that is breath. (All myths in Hinduism about the swan follows from this simple equation).

Verse 13 of this hymn is an interesting one. In translation, it appears as :

‘Prāṇa and apāṇa are rice-and-barley; breath is called the draft ox; breath is set in barley; expiration is called rice.’

What is the meaning of this puzzle ?

It is quite obvious that barley and rice are symbols for the inhaled and exhaled breath respectively, but what is the connecting link ?

‘Yava’ (barley) has a synonym in ‘pravetaḥ’, which, with some concession to poetical liberty, may be considered to be homonymous with ‘praveśaḥ’, meaning ‘ingress’, ‘entrance’, etc. Similarly, ‘vrīhi’ (rice) has a synonym ‘nīvārah’, homonymous in the same manner with ‘nivār’, meaning ‘keep off’ ‘warding off’, etc. It is on the basis of such play upon words that barley has become a symbol for in-breath and rice for out-breath.

As poetic imagery this may not be very good, but tantrics and yogis (siddhas, or sādhyas, the perfect ones) have always preferred to express their concepts in symbols of this sort, however poor they may be. Once such symbols have become current the materials become representatives of the concepts in the rituals. Thus, barley and rice play important part as such in Atharva Vedic passages also, as will be shown later. Another part of this verse refers to ‘prāṇa’ as an ‘ox’ (‘ūḍān’), which has a very close homonymic relationship with udāna, a form of breath in yoga, and with ‘odana’, rice. Odana, rice, plays an important part as a symbol in yoga, as already pointed out, and as will be discussed at greater length later on in this section. The explanation for this is much simpler. Breath supports life, as an ox bears burdens. The ox as a symbol of breath appears in other passages also of the Atharva Veda as will be shown separately in this work. (Ūḍān, ox, and verṣabha or ṛṣabha, bull, are related terms, which explains why the bull is, in Hinduism and Jainism, associated with the origin of the universe).

The use of water as a purificatory element at the preliminary stages will also be discussed elsewhere in this book. But there is one hymn addressed to the ‘Waters’, namely X.5, which has a special significance here. Water is used here as a powerful weapon

conferring numerous benefits, and addressed in various ways. Throughout the hymn, water appears as a real, physical weapon. The invocations culminate in remarkable words in the last verse, namely number 50. In translation, it reads as follows :

‘I, knowing, hurl at this man, to split his head, the four-pointed thunderbolt of the waters ; let it crush all his limbs ; to this on my part let all the gods assent.’

Here, water has become ‘a four-pointed thunderbolt’ a detail which can have reality only if a ‘yantra’ has been drawn using water as the material. (A yantra is a mystical diagram from which issue tremendous powers. Literally, it is ‘a machine’).

As a preliminary to the commencement of yoga, blessings of deities have to be sought, and hymn VI.10 provides an excellent example of how this is done. Here earth, atmosphere, sky, breath, deities hearing, sight, etc., are all invoked, as a ‘vāstu gaṇa’ is the most appropriate one for such practices. Hymn VI.45 shows how evil thoughts are driven away from the mind, and hymn VI.100 illustrates how prayers (brahman) act as defence mechanisms for the mind against evil tendencies. The fifth prayāya of hymn XVI describes the steps taken to ward off sloth and other evil effects arising from sleep.

Now comes concentration of mind, one technique for which is illustrated in outline in hymns 9 and 10 of Book V. After calling upon various deities, to make him as firm as a stone, the yogi has to direct his mind towards his senses, such as sight, hearing etc., identify them respectively with the sun (sight), the earth (body), the atmosphere, (the soul), speech (Sarasvatī) and so on, a form of ‘nyāsa’.

To hymn No. X.2, Whitney has given the title, ‘The Wonderful Structure of Man’, but what its purpose is has completely escaped him. On the face of it, it appears to be merely a monotonous cataloguing of the various parts of the human body, the heels, the ankle-joints, arms, the breath etc., and their functions, with a refrain running throughout as to how they came into being. A little cultural empathy however helps to clarify matters. After

having described in 20 verses, the human anatomy and physiology and linking them with divine powers in this manner in the next 13 verses, the hymn plays with various meanings placed upon the word 'brahman', namely brahman (brahmā), the creator, brahman, the song of praise, brahman, the priest, brahman, the Śakti or Power that emanates from Yoga, and brahman, the sacred knowledge which helps one to acquire such Power. The priest, it appears, is able through his prayers, his knowledge, and the mode of his life, to influence creation and establish a rapport with the creator, thus assisting him in maintaining and supporting the created world. The last verse, namely number 33, makes it abundantly clear that by this means (worship), brahmā entered 'into the resplendent, yellow, golden, unconquered stronghold, that was all surrounded with glory', by which, it is clear from the preceding verses, is meant man, or the priest himself. Thus, this hymn is seen to be a description of the tantric process and final achievement, not indeed in all the details as have developed later, but in its essence as in a proto-type form.

Hymn number I.17 describes another yogic (tantric) technique, namely control of one aspect of bodily function, namely blood-flow. It has been wrongly understood as stanching the flow of blood from a wound or cut.

In Hymn XI.8 (captioned by Whitney as : 'Mystic : especially on the constitution of man'), there is further elaboration on the subject. It is not possible for me to go into all the details contained in the hymn, some of which are very interesting by themselves. Broadly, however, it repeats the same concepts as are contained in hymn X.2 discussed earlier, namely the superiority of the man in whom 'brahman' has entered as compared to his previous state. Verse XI.5.22 makes it clear that brahmā (Prajāpati) is the 'Ātman' (Soul) of the Vedic Student (here yogi), etc. The hymn's additional interest lies in Vedic Studies being deemed to be a part of yogic techniques. (There are even to-day many parallelisms between tantric rituals and the brahmacāry life,—initiation, ear-boring, tonsure, carrying of danda, or staff, begging, bhikṣa and so on.). Verse XI.5.12 also involves Vedic studies in the worship of the 'great virile member.'

This subject, namely 'the great virile member' (the linga) is discussed at great length in hymns X.7 and 8, which Whitney has

entitled respectively: 'Mystic: on the Skambha or frame of creation' and just 'Mystic'. The central point in these two hymns is the theme of the 'Skambha' or 'pillar', which in verses 1 to 3 of hymn 7 is referred to as 'the member of him', meaning quite apparently the male sexual organ in the erect position. These verses do not specifically, and by name, say who this 'he' is, but it is clear from the verses as a whole that Rudra is meant here, as there is a frequent reference to Agni. Rudra, it may be recalled, is the anthropomorphic form of Agni; the Skambhā would then be Rudra's linga. (The Skambha might also refer to Meru, the spinal column of Rudra, brhat, which upholds the heaven and connects it with the earth, yoni):

These hymns describe the manifold nature and powers of this 'Skambha' of Rudra which shall be dealt with in greater detail in the chapter dealing with Rudra, but there is one matter appearing in verses 42 to 44 of hymn 7, and verses 36 and 38 of hymn 8 (both of Book X), of which mention must be made here. According to these hymns, this pillar is compared to a central peg located in the Universe on which a web is woven with thread by means of shuttles placed in the atmosphere; the essential element of this thread is described to be 'brāhmanam', which can in this context be only Śakti, the creative power of brahmā, the creator, the thread being souls (ātman) and the garment human bodies (verse 8.43), the peg (Rudra's linga) providing the central force or power. From verse 8.44, we learn that the yogis (souls) who 'know' these secrets are 'free from desire, wise (dhīra), immortal, self-existent, satisfied with 'sap' (rasa) not deficient in any respect, knowing that wise, unaging, young soul, and not afraid of death.'

The term 'sap', rasa, introduces us to the concept of Kuṇḍalinī, which does not find specific mention, but is implied in the various verses and hymns where the 'sap of the serpent' is said to have been rendered impotent, and the poison rendered harmless. Thus, for example, we have hymn No. V.13. To understand the imagery, we have to view the dormant Kuṇḍalinī as a sort of poison in the body, but when Kundalini is roused, the 'poison' is transferred into the immortal juice of 'liberation'.

I shall, for the time being, pass over many hymns which, while purporting to deal with 'rice dishes', in fact utilise that symbolism,

to describe various facets of proto-tantricism (including those elements which in later times have come to be grouped under the class known as *vāmācāra*). There are at least 6 such hymns, namely, IV.14, 34 and 35 and IX.1, 3 and 5. The symbolism is so involved, and intricate, that it calls for a separate and detailed discussion. This will be carried out in the chapter entitled 'Rice Dishes and Tantricism.'

Meanwhile, to complete this chapter, some remarks on the Atharva Veda's concept of Śakti as Power are relevant here. Hymn II.27 has something to say on this subject. The word *prśnam* is better read as 'questioning', 'challenging' than as 'disputation'. Undoubtedly, 'auśadhi' means literally 'herb' or 'plant', but the implied reference always, and here more particularly, is to the 'power' (Śakti) contained in the plants. Soma, for example, is called 'auśadhi-pati' because conceptually the power (Śakti) is inherent in the plants, soma here standing for Rudra. This hymn must be deemed, therefore, to be dealing with Śakti, the supreme Power. It is sufficient to note that in verse 6, the prayer is addressed to Rudra to confer 'abilities' (Śakti), which is the essence of the whole matter.

Hymn 3.13 is even more illuminating. The subject is 'the Waters', which, as I have shown in my 'Rg Vedic Studies', is a term used to denote Śakti or Power or energy flowing in the Universe. This word is also specifically used in verse 3 to refer to the powers possessed by Indra. The hymn, therefore, is a prayer addressed ostensibly to the Waters but really seeking those special powers which are achieved through yoga and tantrism. (Incidentally, the 'folk etymology' resorted to here for the words 'var' and 'udakam', meaning water, may be noted.).

The term 'virāj' which appears prominently in various passages is clearly a synonym for this Śakti or Power. There are two hymns, namely VIII.9 and 10, wholly dealing with 'virāj', which figures also in many scattered passages, such as IX.10.24, XI.4.12, XII.3.11, XIV.2.15 and 74, and XVII.22, and also in the Puruṣa sūkta of the Rg Veda.

Verse IX.10.24 talks of 'virāj' as being 'Speech, earth, atmosphere, Prajāpati, death, and over-king of the perfectibles (sādhya); in his control are what was, what is to be; let him put in my control

what was, what is to be.' Obviously, Virāj is seen here as the ultimate Power of the whole universe. These sentiments are echoed in XI.12 where it is said: 'breath is virāj', etc. These two are some of the more important ones of the scattered passages, besides XVII.22 where it is said to be 'a wide ruler'. Verse X.10.21, talks of Śakti being in the thighs of the cow, and undoubtedly, a pun (paronomasia) is intended between 'Śakthi' (thigh) and 'Śakti' (Power).

According to VIII.9, which is one of the two hymns wholly devoted to virāj, she is a female, who has produced two young ones (vatsa)—apparently heaven and earth; she is speech, and breath, she shone forth first as Aditi, the sole seer, etc. According to VIII.10, Virāj was the universe in the beginning; she is like a cow, and roamed over the universe; she gave sustenance to Asuras, Fathers, manuṣyah, seven seers, devas, Gandharvas, Apasras, serpents, etc. All this makes it clear that virāj is the Śakti, the Power that yoga and tantrism are in search of. It is, as IX.10.24 points out, the final objective of the sādhyas (śādhyanām adhirāja), sādhyā being the term applied to those who have reached perfection through yoga, somewhat equivalent to the later 'sādhu' or 'siddha.' The great power achieved by these sādhyas (Perfectibles) is described in VIII.8.12 in the following terms: 'The sādhyās go lifting with one net-stake, (apparently a yantra) the Rudras, the Vasus by one, and the Ādityas by one.'

Hymn VII.4, to which Whitney has given the simple title 'Mystic' indicates, in verse 1, that supreme knowledge (or Power) is attainable in four different ways: namely meditation on Vāk, or through 'purification' of mind, or through worship; the fourth method is left undefined as simply 'turiya', the 'fourth', even as to-day. Verse 2 of this hymn indicates that such a one is the 'All of the universe', that is another Rudra. Similarly, the first verse of VII.5, which is in praise of yajna (sacrifice), says: 'By the sacrifice the gods sacrificed to the sacrifice; those were the first ordinances (dharman); those greatneses attach themselves to the firmament, where are the ancient perfectible (pūrva sādhyā) gods'. (To the Atharva Veda, yajna and tapas are one and the same, meaning the sacrifice of one's self through heat generated within oneself, whereas the Rg Veda makes a distinction between the two, yajna being a sacrifice of external objects through an external fire.).

There are six hymns, namely IV.14, 34 and 35 and IX.1, 5 and XI.3, which deal with 'rice preparations' (odana), their 'cooking' (pac) and their association with a goat (aja). It has already been shown earlier in this chapter that 'rice', in tantric circles, stands as the symbol for 'breath'. As for the Sanskrit verb, 'pac', it bears the meaning not only 'to cook', but also others, such as 'to ripen, to mature', etc., which can all be subsumed under the general concept of 'being brought to perfection, becoming developed or brought to fruit'; the word 'aja', usually translated as 'goat', also bears another meaning commonly, as 'the unborn' besides (rarely) 'the soul', 'ātman' (as unborn, and eternally existing).

In interpreting these five hymns both sets of meaning, the literal as well as the symbolic, should be borne in mind and the verses should be viewed at two levels. Odana is 'rice' as well as 'vital breath', pac is 'to cook' as well as 'to bring to perfection', and aja is 'a goat' as well as 'a soul'. Literally rice is cooked with goat's meat, but symbolically breath is controlled so as to bring the soul to perfection. The latter terms refer to tantric concepts and practices, expressed in complex symbolic and esoteric language, as is usual in those circles. Meat (māmsam, and mudra, a curious and significant word for 'parched rice' are, it will be remembered, two of the five (panca) makaras of the extreme left (vāmacāra) t̃āntric sects). (Mudra means literally a sign, or a symbol, and it is probably in that sense that it is made to stand for parched rice in tantricism).

Whitney's translation gives the literal meaning, not the substance which follows from the symbolic expressions. The essence of the latter may now be brought out, based on the above discussion of the basic material.

Hymn IV.4, in the very first verse, shows the soul (aja, goat) as emanating from tapas (or Agni) out of the sacrifice. The soul (or goat) strides about the universe in the remaining verses. Of these, verse 7 is the most important as it speaks of 'five rice-messes' (odana) (breaths) accompanying the goat (soul). Those who are familiar with tantric concepts will recognize the symbolism of 'five breaths', namely prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, samāna and udāna.

The importance of hymns IV.34 and 35 lies in their expatiation of the nature and powers of breath-control, symbolised by the

'cooked rice'. Verse 34.2 assures the presence of 'many women-folk' for the enjoyment of purified souls in heaven, svarga (a purely vāmacāra concept); verses 34.3 and 4 guarantees that Yama (death) cannot subject such 'freed souls' to his control; according to verse 8, the souls of brahmins are of this type, whereby they become 'viṣṭārin', world-conquering, heaven-going and possessing the power to have and to enjoy whatever is desired by them. The first six verses, out of the seven, of hymn 35, carry the refrain: 'let the rice-mess (odana) overpass death', and the seventh and last reaffirms the faith that 'the brahman-rice-mess' (that is to say, the perfected soul of the brahmins) will be all conquering, and will destroy their rivals, who are god-insulters.

Hymn IX.5 runs in the same strain generally, some special aspects being found in verse 7, which identifies aja (goat, or soul) with Agni and jyoti (the primeval light out of which the universe has evolved); verses 11 and 12 indicate the presence of the perfected soul in brahmin-priests; in verse 19, the soul seems to be referred to as 'vipruṣ' (a drop, or mark) which is present as 'the rice-dish of the goat' in brahmins and all human beings (viś); ('vipru' has obviously the same significance as 'anu', a word meaning small, or atom which, in later times, has been adapted to signify the magnitude or size of the soul); the further information contained in verse 19 is that, at the final stage ('meeting of the ways'), all these 'vipruṣes' (souls) reach the world of the well-done (apparently svarga), 'as Agni knows well.'

Hymn XI.1 has also very many important and interesting details of this proto-tāntric cult. Verse 1 shows Agni being born (as the first brahmin) through Aditi's 'cooking of the rice-dish', as one of the seven seers; verse 9 talks of a sacrifice, (yajna) (here apparently a tantric ritual) in which Agni is seated on a hide with two 'allied' stones which quite obviously refers to the male sexual organ (the linga and its two stones testicles); verses 13, 14, 21, 23, etc., introduce women into the ritual; verse 23 clearly implies that the first ritual of this sort was 'fashioned by ṛta' and the mind, meaning that the first (proto-type) ritual (sacrifice or tantric) was a mental performance of the creator; verses 28 and 37 say in effect that the soul of the brahmins is 'immortal jyoti'; and finally we have the curious verse, the 32nd, which asks 'babhru'

(usually a designation of Rudra) to 'sow discord' amongst the non-brahmins who may try to adopt these rituals; here, 'babhru' is said to act as a 'demon' (rakṣas).

Hymn XI.3 is a lengthy one, running into 56 verses in 3 parayāyas. It also deals with 'the rice-mess' (odana); this is not a general but a particular one, which is described in 6 verses (50 to 56) in the third paryāya. Verse 50 says it is the summit (viṣṭapa) of the ruddy one (bradhna) apparently meaning the soul (or spirit) of Rudra; it is from this (verse 51) that Prajāpati fashioned 33 worlds (!), meaning obviously the universe with all its 33 devas; it appeared (verse 53) in the form of a sacrifice for the purpose of knowledge; apparently, we are to understand by this that the world was a creation, born of Rudra's mind, for the purpose of 'worshipping' (yajña) him by means of tapas; verses 54 to 56 stress the importance of breath-control, firstly for the purpose of realising in oneself this Rudra, and secondly, for attaining long life and immortality.

In verse 1 (in paryāya 1), Bṛhaspati is said to be the 'head' and Bṛhaman 'the mouth' of this 'odana' here Rudra). ((This would make Bṛhaman and Bṛhaspati, the Mukhalinga of later times). The next 24 verses are concerned with describing the powers and nature of this particular odana (Rudra), from which, as ucchiṣṭa in verse 21, all the devas are said to have emerged. Verses 26 to 31 indulge in some word-play based on the metaphor which refers to the soul as a 'rice-mess' and on the synonym 'bhakta' for boiled odana, since bhakta also signifies eating, a synonym for which is 'pra-as' which is assonant with parānc (retiring) and pratyanc (coming on), a sort of punning for which Sanskrit literature has a penchant. Out of all this emerges the idea that inhaled breath (or absorption of Rudra into oneself through t̃āntric rituals) leads to life (and immortality), whereas the opposite leads to death. The second section (paryāya) of this hymn contains 18 verses (32 to 49). Rather monotonously (in the true spirit of t̃āntric literature) they describe the various ways of eating this odana, that is, the worship of Rudra in this cult; and the postures adopted therefor. In each case is described the t̃āntric benefit accruing therefrom.

One of the most interesting hymns on breath control and its significance is III.10. It is very esoteric, and rather difficult to

translate or understand, as it is full of the peculiar forms of punning, ślesa, etc., as adopted in Sanskrit poetics, where assonance rouses greater interest than meaning.

SECTION 6

THE ŚAMSKĀRAS.

There are many rites and ceremonies to be observed by the Hindus for purifying and sanctifying the body, mind and intellect, and also to meet the religious requirements of the individual as a member of the community at every critical phase of his life from the time of conception till death. These rites and ceremonies are collectively referred to as 'samskāras', and cover every important event and activity in the individual's life. They are usually grouped together under five heads as follows :

1. Prenatal,
2. Childhood,
3. Educational,
4. Marriage, and
5. Funeral.

It is only the upper three castes, the dvijas (twice-born) to whom all the five apply. The third item, namely educational, has no relevance to the Śudras, who are not allowed to have an intellectual education. As for the pañcamas, the out-castes, Hinduism is not concerned with whatever sacraments or rites they might choose outside the community. Even amongst the dvijas, the third samskāra, namely the educational, plays a serious part only amongst the brahmin community. The present day authority for the Samskāras are the grhya-sūtras. All the rites and ceremonies described in these texts are intended essentially for the brahmin community, and special mention is made therein of such of those as apply to the kṣatriyas and vaiśyas.

The grhya-sūtra texts are post-Vedic compositions, and each saṃhita has its own set of them. Nevertheless, there is a certain uniformity in the rites and ceremonies, and the only important

difference amongst them is the mantras are to be recited on the occasion of the rite. The mantras are drawn from the saṁhita to which the sūtra text claims to be attached. Thus Rg Vedic grhya sūtras, such as Āpastamba, quote from the Rg Veda mantras, the Yajur Vedic from that saṁhita and so on. But in all these cases, there is scarcely any relationship between the mantra and the rite. In fact, the only Vedic saṁhita which concerns itself with such matters is the Atharva Veda, and it is to this source that all grhya sūtras are ultimately indebted for their material. This can be seen clearly in spite of all the camouflage adopted by the non-Atharvanic grhya sūtras to hide the fact. It is only the Atharvanic Kausika and Vaitāna Sūtras, which openly acknowledge their debt to that saṁhita. But even in their case, the irrelevance of the quoted mantra and the rite to which it is applied remains.

The word saṁskāra does not appear in the Vedas, including the Atharva Veda. Even in the case of this Veda, the verses dealing with this subject are scattered about, and in many cases, cannot be identified as referring to a saṁskāra at all without a careful and deep analysis. It can be readily inferred that these rites must have been in vogue long before the composition, or rather compilation, of the Atharva Veda, where they still appear in an uncoded and unsystematic form. A re-grouping of the verses according to their contents is necessary to show the extent to which these rites were in operation at the time of the compilation of the Vedic text. The word saṁskāra is used here only for the purpose of such a classification and to indicate the nature of the rite.

As in all sacraments, there is naturally an element of magic in these rites, perhaps a little more than in Christian or other sacraments, but it would not be correct on that account to term them as magic, whether black or white. In spite of the air of incantation which hangs about the verses, the rites are real sacraments and not magical spells, but with a t̃āntric twist, in that the priests apparently treated them as t̃āntric rites.

1. *Pre-natal rites :*

There are at least 8 hymns which are used in pre-natal rites. They are I.11, III.23, V.25, VI.11, 17, 81 and 122 and VIII.6. Hymn III.23 is a prayer for fecundity. Hymns I.11, V.23, VI.83 and 122 and VIII.6 seek to ensure sure conception, and safe delivery, and to

guard the pregnant woman. In verses 18 and 19 of VIII.6, 'the brown one, with a formidable bow', (pingastam ugradhanvā) who cannot be anyone but Rudra, is appealed to.

2. There are at least 5 hymns which can be deemed to be childhood rites. They are II.13, 28 and 29, and VI. 140 and 141.

Hymns II.13, 28 and 29 pray that the child may enjoy long life. In verse 2 of II.13, Brhaspati is said to have given a garment unto king Soma for enveloping himself and in verse 3, the advice is given that by wearing this garment, one becomes a protector of people (perhaps this is addressed to a prince at his coronation), and will enjoy long life. In verse 4, the child (or prince) is asked to stand on a stone, so that his body may become hard like a stone and long life may ensue. (Here there is a touch of t̃āntricism in the rite).

Hymn VI.140 is a rite on the occasion of the child's first cutting of teeth.

Hymn VI.141 has been entitled 'With marking of cattle's ears' by Whitney, following the Kauśika Sutra as stated by himself. But, there is no reference to cattle at all in the hymn, and it appears to be in the nature of a saṃskara rite on the occasion of a child's ear-boring ceremony.

3. Educational :

The youth of the twice-born (dvi-ja), that is, those belonging to the three upper castes, have compulsorily to undergo a course of studies, for a certain number of years at the hands of a guru. A number of rites—as in a saṃskara—are prescribed to be performed when the studies begin and end, and also as they progress. The Atharva Veda does recognise the caste system, and does mention the names of the four main groups of the system, namely brahmins, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and sūdras.

The details of the life of the Vedic Student as given in the Atharva Veda refer entirely to the brahmin boys. They include such matters as commencement prayer and invocation, the guru's preliminary advice to the student, and his prayers to various deities for pro-

tection, long life and providing encouragement to the youthful aspirant. The deities are asked to confer wisdom on the youth, and help him complete his studies successfully, so that he may appear in 'splendour'. The rites include ceremonial purification, tonsure and shaving of beard, and the conferment of the sacred thread and the provision of a danda (staff). There are other details of activities required of him, such as begging. The prayers and ceremonies conducted at the end of the course of the studies are also described.

All these aspects are examined in detail in the following paras :

(a) *Hymn I.1* : This is a prayer addressed to the lord of Speech, vācaspati, for conferment of knowledge, Vedic knowledge being communicated by the guru through oral means. The lord of speech, vācaspati, is not mentioned by name, but in the context may be inferred to be Brhaspati, if not Rudra himself as Atharvan, as the phrase goes in the Atharva Veda. Hymn VI.128 prescribes the most auspicious times.

(b) *Hymn II.2* : (This is the guru speaking at the beginning of the Studies.).

The interpretation of this depends upon the understanding of the words : (1) Śaram (verse 1) ; (2) suśevah (verse 2) ; (3) rbhum (verse 3) ; (4) didhyum śarum (verse 3) ; (5) tejana (verse 4) ; (6) munja (verse 4) ; and (7) rogam and āśvam (verse 4).

The student is compared (verse 2) to a bow-string ; he has to bend like it, to receive knowledge, and then become hardened to withstand enemies (doubts) who assail him. He is next compared to an arrow made of reed, and even as the latter has been nourished by rain (father Parjanya) and earth (mother), so also has he been nourished and brought up by his father and mother. (verse 2). As the vine embracing the tree finds the reed singing, so also when the student leans on the guru, he will learn well. Even as, Agni (tejana) stands supporting heaven above earth, so also the sacred munja grass will give tejas by driving away ignorance.

(c) *Hymn II.3 (As in II.2)* : Here, the metaphors change but the meaning is the same, namely, ignorance of the student is driven out (and knowledge poured in) by the guru.

(The language does appear coarse, but that is the way of the *tāntrics* and *siddhas*).

(d) *Hymns I.5 and 6 & VI. 19*: These are purification ceremonies in which water is the purificatory agent.

(e) *Hymns II.7 and 8 (Also II.28)*: The 'yatudhānas' of verse 1 are not sorcerers, but followers of an extreme ascetic sect, as I have already explained in my 'Rg Vedic Studies'.

As for 'kimidins', Yāska's etymology which is of a 'folk etymology' type, and, therefore, not governed by the linguistic laws of modern scholarship, seems to be quite valid, even though Whitney has rejected it out of hand. Yāska says it is a twisted form of 'kim idanim', 'What now?' which would be the same thing as 'kimidam', 'What is all this?', a phrase of contempt which unbelievers could be expected to hurl at their opponents. 'Kimidins' would, therefore, mean 'non-believers', 'doubters', etc.

These two verses would then reveal themselves as prayers addressed by the guru to Agni to protect the student from the attacks of unbelievers and from the doctrines of extreme ascetics, (who naturally were hostile to Vedic Studies.).

(f) *Hymns II.9 and 10, etc.*: In both these verses, the guru is found appealing to Indra, Varuṇa, Agni and other devas to protect and guide the student. Similar is the trend of verses VI.2 to 7.

(g) Prayers to divinities for conferment of knowledge and Wisdom (*medha*) on the Student.

This is sought in VI.108, VII.57 (to Sarasvatī for 'Speech'), VII.66 and 67, etc. The prayers for success in assembly (as for example, VIII.12) may perhaps be also included here.

In addition, special mention must be made of various other hymns which, as in the case of II.1., may be considered as invocations at the commencement of the studies and are addressed to Savitar and Brhaspati. They are VI.1 (Savitar praised by Atharvan's son), VII.14 and 15 (addressed to Savitar), VII.16 (to Savitar and Brhaspati), VII.44 (for Speech), and VII.66 and 67 (prayers for knowledge, soul, property, etc.) etc.

At the end of the studentship, special prayers are offered for the glorification and splendour (*varcasah*) of the student as in III.22, for example.

(h) *Relationship between teacher (guru) and student*: The relationship between teacher (*guru*) and student is described in hymn VI. 70 in allegorical terms as that of cow and calf, so closely attached have they to be to each other; while the student has to stay close to the teacher, and draw nourishment (spiritual and intellectual) from the *guru*, the latter should in turn nurture, love and protect him. This is further elaborated in III.8, with added emphasis on the authority which the *guru* exercises over the student. The *guru* exhorts, in VII.105, the student to lead a holy life. Verse XI.5 sees the *guru* as a sort of mother, keeping the student within himself as an embryo, and delivering him at the end of the studies, thus giving him a second birth (a *dvi-jā*).

(i) *Rites and ceremonies*:

(i) The rite of shaving as described in VI.68 is quite obviously a part of the commencement rites of studentship.

(ii) The act of begging (*bhikṣā*), which is ordained on the student during his novitiate, can be deemed to be a sort of rite, and it is referred to in VI.71 (where food is given to, and received by, the student who has no voice in deciding its nature, etc.). Verse XI.5.9 specially mentions this as 'the Vedic Student first brought alms (*bhikṣā*)'.

(iii) The most important rite for the *brahmacārin* is the conferment of the Sacred Thread (later known as *yajnopaviṣṭa*).

Hymn VI.133 expounds the special powers and properties of the girdle; it is a weapon and with it goes a vow (verse 2); it confers wisdom, fervour and Indra's power (verse 4); it gives long life (verse 5); this sacred girdle 'fastens down the student to the control of a god, (undoubtedly Rudra is meant), who is asked to release him' (verse 1); the *brahmacārin* is said to be a 'death's student' (verse 3) and the sacred thread signifies both this 'death' and his release from the clutches of Yama; the complete description is covered by the phrase '*dvi-jā*' (twice-born), which has become current in later times. (This term, *dvi-jah*, occurs in the Atharva Veda also, but in the 19th hymn, verse 71.1).

Hymn IX.1, to which Whitney has given the caption, 'To the honey-whip, etc.', is a most important and puzzling one. There has been no satisfactory explanation for it, and the solution lies in the correct understanding, which has so far escaped the skill of all scholars, of the word 'madhu-kaśā', which literally means 'honey-whip'. There is a mention of this 'madhu-kaśā' in the RV, (verses I.22.3 and 157.4), and it is there said to belong to the Aśvins. The Atharva Vedic hymn (IX.1) under discussion has Atharvan as its seer, and it makes clear throughout that here also the 'madhu-kaśā' belongs to the Aśvins.

It requires a close study and analysis of the verses of this hymn to ascertain what this 'honey-whip' is and what its connection with the Aśvins.

Verses 1 to 13 and 21 (of this hymn) state that the whip 'comes' from the universe, through meditation (verse 3), (mīmāṃs—is the word used, but it has yoga overtones since through it men are reported to be able to 'see the movements of the 'madhu-kaśā'); its source is said to be 'the navel of immortality' (verse 4), (which is a clear reference to heaven or 'svarga'). Verses 11, 14 to 19, etc. are addressed to Aśvins, and various other deities, and verses 11, 16, 17 and 19 specially. (Aśvins, as I have explained at length in my Rg Vedic Studies are lords of Time, work with power to restore youth and confer immortality).

It is in verse 24 (the last verse of the hymn) that we have the first inkling to the fact that the term 'kaśā' is not to be treated as meaning 'whip' but rather as 'string' or 'thread', for it is said there, 'I stand with the sacred cord over the right shoulder etc.' (prācina upaviṭa tiṣṭah, etc.). The 'madhu kaśā' is, therefore, identifiable with 'the sacred thread' of the dvijāh. The 'honey' part of the word is attributable to the fact that it is said to confer 'splendour, brilliance, strength, and force as flies pour down upon honey' (verse 17), and above 'all immortality' drawn from 'svarga' (verses 1 and 5) qualities and powers which are specially attributed to the Aśvins. It has to be borne in mind that the Aśvins are lords of the Vasanta (Spring) season. (It is quite probable that the brahmins of those times underwent the upanayana ceremony in the spring season.).

Hymn XI.5 is a paean to the Vedic Student (brahmacārin) and at the same time, it provides a description of his life and achievements, often in allegorical terms. He is in tapas of a cosmic nature (verse 1); all the devas and powers are subordinate to him (verse 2); his activities as a student (for example, lighting the fuel, seeking of alms (bhikṣā) (verse 9), clothing himself (verse 6) in black-antelope-skin, generating the virāj, the Śakti (verse 7), becoming the guardian of the brāhmana, (the lore of brāhma here); and thus not only 'knowing', but himself 'becoming brahman' (brahmā) through tapas (verse 10), creating fire by rubbing together the two arāṇis (as the cosmic fire is created by the rubbing together of the two bodies, heaven and earth) (verse 11), worshipping the 'great virile member' (the linga) which 'the ruddy white-goer' (Rudra) 'has introduced in the earth' and thereby sustaining the universe (verse 12), with his fuel acting as agent energising the sun, the moon, Mātariśvan, the Waters etc., leading to rain (not only of water but of prosperity), etc., all have cosmic impact. The brahmacārin's teacher is said to be death (in verse 14) and Varuṇa (verse 15). 'The teacher is the brahmacāry, and the brahmacāry is Prajāpati; Prajāpati rules through virāj (śakti) which takes shape as Indra', so says verse 16. It is this power residing in the brahmacāry, and exercised by him, which enables a king to rule, a guru to teach (verse 17), a girl to win a husband, and cattle and horses to find food (verse 16). All creatures and plants owe their life to him (verse 21 and 22). He himself possesses immortality, and it is he who endows immortality on the devas and the deities through the 'brāhmaṇa power' in him (verse 23). Thus he shines in splendid glory in breath, speech, mind, heart, brahman and wisdom (verse 24), which he in turn can endow on the worthy (verse 24).

The whole hymn ends with a flourish on a resounding note in verse 26: 'Giving shape (form, nāma-rūpa) to things, the brahmacāry stood performing penance (tapas) on the waters of the ocean; bathed, brown and ruddy (pingala) he shines on the earth' (just like Rudra himself).

The essence of the whole matter is that Vedic studies convert a brahmin into a brahmacāri who is veritably a living Rudra-Siva on the earth, gathering together his powers through tapas just like his model or proto-type. The Atharva Veda in fact

makes the tapas as a more potent force than the yajna of the Rg and Yajur Vedas, and Rudra-Siva a more powerful deva,—being the same Absolute as Brahmā,—than all the devas of the Rg Veda put together.

Here, we have in the nascent stage the 'avatār-hood' of Rudra. In the case of Viṣṇu, a similar concept is generated only in post-Vedic times, and is there limited to ten numbers, whereas here, there is no limit, and every brahmin is a potential avatār of Rudra. A more important distinction is that the reverse process is possible in Śaivism, but not in Vaiṣṇavism. A Rudra brahmachary can become Rudra, but a Vaiṣṇavite cannot become Viṣṇu. He can only reach Viṣṇu's feet.

4 & 51—*Marriage and Funeral Ceremonies :*

There remain now two saṃskāras, and they are major ones like that of Vedic Studies, still to be discussed. Their importance as saṃskāras is recognised in the AV by assigning separate Books to them, the XIV for Marriage and the XVIII for Funerals. Besides this, there are scattered verses and hymns dealing with these subjects, cremation as a sacrifice appearing for example in a whole hymn, namely XII.3, and hymn XII.2 also has much to say on the subject of Funeral fire.

The Marriage and Funeral Hymns in Books XIV and XVIII respectively are made up of verses drawn for the most part from the Rg Veda or more likely transferred in the reverse direction. This is more especially so the case with the Funeral hymns.

The details on this subject are too many to be covered in entirety in this work ; in any case most of them are made in direct, and not symbolic, language which eliminates the need for elaborate analysis. Except for a few matters, the verses pose no problem in their exegesis and have been included and discussed in separate works dealing with these subjects in the studies of Hindu saṃskaras. For all these reasons, therefore, I do not propose dealing with them in detail here. I shall direct attention only to such matters whose implications are difficult to follow, or which are of special interest as being connected with Rudra.

4. Marriage :

The AV follows the RV in taking the marriage of Sūrya as the model of its kind. (I shall be dealing with the marriage of Soma and Sūryā in a separate work).

Hymn XIV.1 : There, Soma was 'the bride-seeker' (verse XIV.1.9) 'the Aśvins being the wooers and Agni the fore-runner' (verse 1.8.). The magic element comes into the picture in verse 25, which has been interpreted to mean that the bride's undergarment is charged with magical power and unless given away to the priests could cause harm to the husband. Verse 45 takes resort to the cloth-making craft to find a metaphor to describe the formation of the body, whence we have a number of homonyms ; tan, tanu and tanū provide a punning effect. From this, it takes but a short step to make this a tāntric performance. It may be remarked here that this figure of speech is quite commonly adopted by the Atharva Veda e.g., in the hymn on skambha.

The Kauśika Sūtra takes brahman in the literal sense to mean a brahmin priest, and advocates the presence of the priests all round the bride in the procession. It appears to me to be rather to be a symbolical expression, signifying the presence of brahman (brahmā, here Rudra), as protecting and watching over the proceedings.

Hymn XIV.2 : Verses 3 and 4 of this hymn present a puzzle. Soma is said to be the first husband, perhaps because of the moon's (Soma) influence on the menstrual flow ; Gandharva being the second husband indicates the freedom enjoyed by the girl through music and dance, and perhaps also in sexual freedom before marriage ; Agni purifies her before the actual marriage ; (perhaps there was a special Agni rite for this purpose in those days, or the marriage fire itself is taken as signifying this) ; there is no mystery about the fourth husband being the human one.

It may be noted here that all the three first 'husbands' are forms of Rudra, which implies that the marriage ceremony itself is a Rudra-Siva ritual, thus linking it with yoga and tantra. Verses 15 and 74 make a significant statement ; the bride is 'virāj', that is, to say, she is her husband's śakti, and thus gives him energy and power. In verses 23 and 24, the bride is asked to sit upon 'the red hide', whose symbolism in yoga (tantric) techniques is

that it is charged with power (*śakti*) which is conveyed to the person seated on it. This power comes from Rudra to whom the red hide belongs, and he is the god who in verse 24 is referred to as 'the fire who slays all the demons.'

Verse 32 says: 'the gods in the beginning lay with (*ni-pad*) their spouses', and this is the model for all sexual intercourse, in marriage, in tantra of the *vāmācāra* sect and all other cases.

Verses 33 to 35 seek to persuade the Gandharva Viśvāvasu (Rudra) to give up the girl, having been her second husband, and go away to the Apsarases, his regular wives (This points to the sexual practices and promiscuity of Rudra and his followers, of the *vāmācāra* sect of tāntrics).

5. *Funeral*:

Before taking up the four hymns of Book XVIII which specifically deal with funeral ceremonies, the scattered passages where this subject is dealt with elsewhere may first be noticed.

First of all is hymn I.14, which is not, as Whitney's caption says, an 'Imprecation of Spinsterhood on a Woman', but a mere detailing of some of the misfortunes befalling a woman on the death of her husband. Her freedom is curtailed, and as verse 4 delicately puts it, she can no longer indulge in the sexual act.

Hymn XII.2 classifies fire (*Agni*) as flesh-eating and householder's fires. The former refers to cremation and the latter to the protecting deity, and they are the malefic and auspicious forms of Rudra. Jointly, they make Rudra-Śiva. 'When a woman's husband dies, the houses are united with seizure (*grāhi*); the aid of a knowledgeable brahmin has to be sought to remove the flesh-eating one (and restore the auspicious fire)'. So say verse 39. Verse 48 shows that the inflated skin of an ox was in use in those days as a float (*plava*) to cross streams.

Hymn XII.3 is wholly devoted to discussing 'Cremation as a Sacrifice'. Verse 11 is an interesting and intriguing one and some time spent on the elucidation of its meaning would be rewarding.

A better rendering of the word, '*dhruva*', which is ordinarily translated as 'the fixed quarter' would in my opinion, be 'the

post. stake, the stem, or trunk, etc.' which in this context would be the 'central pillar upholding heaven and earth', which is referred to frequently both in the Rg and Atharva Vedās. It is a linga, representative of Rudra-Siva. This suggested alternative meaning for 'dhruva' in this context makes the homage paid to it as 'virāj' (śakti or power) more significant. The further reference to it as 'Śiva' gives an added meaning to its auspicious character, for the word could then mean the wife (or Śakti) of Śiva. In that case, the appeal to Aditi falls in place, since Aditi, as I have shown in my Rg Veda, is the supreme Śakti. The 'cooked ones' in this verse are of course the souls, the symbolism having been dealt with in extenso elsewhere by me in this work.

Verse 13 also gives much food for thought. It brings out the terrific power possessed by water in 'cleaning', that is in removing evil influences. According to this hymn, the death of the embryo in a pregnant woman is caused (symbolically) 'by the black bird (death) sitting over the orifice (bilam, here the vagina of the woman), or by the touch of an unclean woman (dasi). In such a case, the evil influence can be removed by water applied to the mortar (wife) and pestle (husband).

Verses 26 to 30, properly interpreted, provide very valuable information. They are essentially concerned with the drops (stoka) referred to in verse 28 as innumerable (sankhya) and varied in colour, as many as living beings and herbs, (rudras), both clean and unclean. They come down from the sky (verse 26), fasten on earth and then go back upwards towards the atmosphere, the pure ones going further upwards (verse 27), becoming 'cooked like a rice-dish' (a phrase which I have already explained elsewhere in this work as meaning pure souls). Verse 29 says 'they struggle up, and dance when heated and then they hurl foam and drop abundant drops' (bindu, here human semen); they are told to unite themselves with waters (here the element in the female organ), just as a woman in passion mates with her husband. Verse 30 talks of these drops (stokah) being made to stand up, and touch themselves with waters, and goes on further to compare with rice-grains (souls) measured out in a vessel (material body). It is clear from all this that the word 'stoka' (drops) is a synonym for 'retas' which itself is a synonym for 'ānu' (soul) as I have shown elsewhere.

All this is clearly a prelude to the later Sāṅkhya doctrine of the soul and re-birth.

Book XVIII with all its four hymns devoted to the funeral may now be taken up.

Hymn XVIII.1 :

In verse 4 of this hymn, Yama while rejecting the advances of Yami says that their union, if indulged in, would resemble that of 'Gandharva in the Waters (that is Rudra), and the watery woman', (yoṣa, obviously an Apsara, a Rudrāni or Śivā). In verse 21, (this is RV X.11.3) we are told that 'dhī' (not prayer as Whitney translates it, but sacrifice, yajna being its synonym) was first instituted when 'the Āryan people (viś) chose Agni, as their priest (hotṛ)', which implies that an Agni cult, of a different type existed amongst the people with whom the Āryans had come to mingle.

Hymn XVIII.2 :

Verse 1 of this hymn looks upon cremation as a form of sacrifice (yajna) where the soma (here body) is purified by Agni, who carries the oblation to Yama.

Verse 6 is an extremely puzzling one, whose meaning still remains a secret, with Whitney observing 'the commentator's (Sāyana's) ignorance is as great as our own; only he has no mind to acknowledge it.'

Verse 7 furnishes the information which is now well-known, namely 'the eye of the dead man goes to the sun, the soul (ātman) to the wind, 'dharma' (which we may translate broadly as 'his nature, or character') to heaven and earth or to the waters, and to the plants his body.

Verse 34 is an important one as it gives indication of various modes of disposal of the dead then prevalent. It says: 'They that are buried (burial), they that are scattered (thrown into rivers? 'vap'), they that are burnt (cremation), and they that are set-up (uddhita, exposed?)'.

In verses 51, 52, 57, etc., the earth is said to be a garment, (apparently this refers to cases of burial).

Verse 59 and 60 refer to the symbols characterising the brahmins and kṣatriyas respectively. For the former, it is the staff, and the for the latter the bow. They are symbols of splendour and strength in both cases, the difference being that the brahmins achieve these qualities through 'śrotriyam', which is better rendered as knowledge gathered through oral teaching, and the kṣatriyas their authority (kṣatram) by means of the bow. Curiously, it is the brahmins who are rich in heroes (vīrah, a word which in this context must be read, not as heroes in battle, but men steadfast in acquiring knowledge through tapas (penance as it is termed); in contrast the kṣatriyas are said to desire only prosperity (vasu).

Hymn XVIII.3 :

Verses 1 and 2 of this hymn give indications of 'sati' having been in vogue in times earlier than the AV, only a mock rite commemorating it being retailed in these mantras. This is further confirmed by verses 3 and 4 which talk of the re-marriage of the widow.

Verse 9 seems to contemplate some sort of re-birth.

Verse 40 bears a close relationship to the RV 10.13.3, except that the former substitutes verses 3 and 4 for the latter's 5 and 4, with other slight changes. In my 'Rg Vedic Studies—Part V', I have shown the relevance of the Rg Vedic verse to seven-note rules of musical melody; the Atharva Veda verse also appears to refer to these same notes of music meaning merely that there are seven of them, without laying down any rule of relationship between them.

Verse 41 indicates that before Bṛhaspati founded and established the sacrificial (yajna) rites, Yama, the first father of human beings (Father Atharvan as the phrase goes in other passages of the AV), did not contemplate immortality, that is to say, before the time of Bṛhaspati, and the origin of sacrificial (yajna) rites, men had no concept of immortality.

Verse 54 is only of indirect interest. The 'bowl' that is referred to there is without doubt the moon, where soma (indu) ever purifies itself; it is this bowl which Atharvan (the Father obviously) presented to Indra.

Verse 55 is a sort of rectifying hymn setting right the deficiency which afflicts those whose dead body is not cremated, and hence, are not subjected to purification by Agni. It is a sort of magical spell or prayer to Agni for this purpose.

Hymn XVIII.4 :

Verse 3, not very important by itself, has a very important bearing in the interpretation of other passages in the Rg and Atharva Vedas. It refers to 'Svarga' (heaven) as a place where 'the Adityas feed on honey'. Thus, it confirms the interpretations of 'honey' as a symbol of immortality (as in the case of madhu-kaśā, and Viṣṇu's three steps, etc.).

The place of verses 5 and 6 is more properly the Rg or Yajur Veda and their Brāhmaṇa texts, for they praise the sacrifice (yajna) and portray it as a cosmological event.

Verse 28, is, according to Whitney, the same as RV X.17.11, but I find that the Sanskrit original of the former (as quoted by Sātvalēkar and Devichand) differs slightly from the latter as appearing in Max Muller's edition of the RV. The former has 'prthvim' and 'dyām' for the latter's 'prthamān' and 'dyūn'. Perhaps, it is this which has led to the translations of the two verses respectively by Whitney and Griffith being different in some substantial particulars. As far as the Atharva Vedic passage is concerned, it bears a meaning identical with I.14.28, and the 'drops' are the soul-atoms (ānu).

Verse 30 talks of 'a jar (idā) with four orifices' which when milked produced 'honey for well-being', etc. This is the same bowl that is referred to in XVIII.3.54; it is the moon, and 'the four orifices' represent the four quarters of the lunar phases.

In terms of verse 56, the son has, before igniting the funeral pyre, to take up and wear the gold (ornament) which his father was wearing before. It must have been the symbol of authority which now passes from the dead father to the living son. The phrase in the latter part of the verse, namely, 'of thy father, going to heaven, do thou wipe off the right hand' symbolises the transfer of this authority, the right hand being the hand exercising the powers that go with such authority.

Such golden emblems are, however, usually worn on the head, in the form of a crown or a diadem, 'a sort of cloth head-band, sometimes adorned with jewels, formerly worn by Oriental kings' (as Webster defines a diadem in his 'American College Dictionary').

SECTION 7

[THE ŚNĀTAKA HYMN]

(Book XVI)

Book XVI has nine (9) paryāyas, with 13, 6, 6, 7, 6, 11, 13, 27 and 4 verses respectively in the first, second and so on paryāyas. Whitney, in his brief introduction to this book, finds it doubtful whether there is any unity ('pervading concinnity') of purpose in this hymn as a whole. As the translation stands, the difficulty is undoubtedly there, but the fact is that something more than mere literal translation is necessary for overcoming it, and that can only be achieved by taking into account the cultural context and background. To some extent, this is provided by the Kauśika Sūtra, but the very equivocal nature of its explanations (as pointed out by Whitney) nullifies whatever useful information that can be extracted from it. For example, the Sūtra relates some of the passages to ceremonies connected with a brahmacārin's Vedic Studies and others with various witch-craft rituals. Nor are there any other sources which could be tapped for the traditional understanding of the significance of the hymn. Tradition stands aloof from the Atharva Veda and keeps it at a distance.

We are, therefore, compelled to fall back on the text itself, and difficult though this procedure may appear at first sight, when the initial obstacles are overcome, the results prove to be very fruitful.

It is on the basis of an understanding reached in this manner that I have given the title, 'The Snataka Hymn', to this piece, a term which cannot be found in the verses themselves, but which is perfectly justifiably inferable from them, and the more especially so as no other central unifying title can be found.

Paryāya 1 :

This paryāya refers to the purifying powers of the 'Waters' which are established by indirect reference to various myths. That 'the waters' are being used here with this very intention of purifying the ceremonial 'field' is made abundantly clear in all the verses. This may then be considered as signifying the commencement of a sacred rite.

Paryāya 2 :

The second paryāya prays that the speech of the worshipper be 'honey-like', that is soft, and persuasive, and that his sight may remain 'eagle-like' and undimmed. Conferment of such gifts could normally be expected either at the commencement of a rite, or at the conclusion of a series of sacred rites.

Paryāya 3 and 4 :

In these two paryāyas there are altogether 13 verses, and all of them are devoted to seeking such gifts as 'long life, riches, cattle, dexterity, protection, status as head of equals', freedom from longing (greed ?), intellect, sorrows, etc.

It is interesting to note that in verse 5 of the 3rd paryāya, Br̥haspati is addressed in these terms : 'br̥haspatiṃ ma ātmā nr̥mana nāma hr̥dya' (translated by Whitney as : 'Br̥haspati my soul, manly minded by name, hearty'). Br̥haspati, it needs no reminder, is the first Āngirasa ; he is the chief and first guru of the brahmins, and the verse is to be read in that light.

Quite obviously then these two paryāyas constitute a prayer at the completion, rather than at the commencement, of Vedic Studies.

Paryāya 5 :

This is an adjuration against slothful sleep, whose baneful effect is compared to death, (Yama), perdition, evils generated by bad dreams, etc. Brahmins, especially brahmacārins, and in fact all men, are constantly warned in all passages against this evil.

It would not be unjustifiable to consider that this is a prayer well-suited to the occasion of a brahmacārī's completion of his

studies, and his going out alone to face the temptations of life as a house-holder, and having to manage without the aid of a guru, who had kept a constant watch over him while he was just a student at his feet.

Paryāyas 6 and 7 :

These two paryāyas constitute a continuation of the three preceding ones but with an unhappy twist. Whereas the latter were made with all good intentions for beneficial results for the person himself, in these two verses, namely 6 and 7, the prayer is that all these evils, which the supplicant seeks to be rid of, may be passed on to others, namely the revilers, the spoilers, the sadanvas and so on. It appears to me that this is not necessarily due to any malevolence in the supplicant, as so much due to a theory (or philosophy) in terms of which evil cannot altogether be destroyed or eliminated but can only pass from one place or person to another. There is plenty of evidence that this is a very pervasive concept in Hindu culture, and in dualistic metaphysics plenty of valid arguments can be found to support it.

Paryāyas 8 and 9 :

These two paryāyas (of 19 verses in all) resound with a sense of triumph and achievement, but they differ in regard to the nature of the achievement.

Verses 1 and 27 (the first and last verses) of the 8th Paryāya enumerate brilliancy, brahman (śakti?) heaven, sacrifice, cattle progeny, vīra (heroes), long life, health, etc. At the same time, it exults over the success achieved in depriving enemies of similar good things. The remaining 25 verses continue to express the hope that the enemy would suffer. It is prayed that he should become a victim of fetters of various kinds, such as perdition, calamity, 'wives of gods' (!), Atharvans (!), Āngirases (!), seasons, Varuṇa, etc. The reference to the fetters of Atharvans and Āngirases (verses 11 to 14) makes it clear that the opponents on whom the curses are poured belong to sects which do not accept the Atharva Veda and that, therefore, this is a sectarian dispute.

Paryāya 9 is free from all such malicious curses, and merely enumerates apparently in a thankful frame of mind, what all success

has been achieved, namely riches, sacrifice, victory in warfare (?) and above all immortality, and entry into heaven (svar), the land of (eternal) life and light.

Prayers of the type occurring in paryāyas 8 and 9 of this Book would normally be expected on the occasion of overcoming of crisis, or towards the end of one's life, or in the transition stage from one phase of life to another. Such a situation could well be deemed to occur when the Vedic student has completed his studies and is stepping out to take up the life of a householder, with determination and courage born out of firm convictions.

In the grhya sūtraic stage this is a stage when the brahmacārin is referred to as a 'snātaka', or one who has taken a (ritual) bath. That is why I have given this hymn the title 'The Snataka Hymn'.

SECTION 8

ROHĪTĀ, THE RED ONE.

(Book XIII)

The four hymns that make up Bk. XIII of the Atharva Veda are all concerned with the relationship between the sun and the deity named Rohita, the Red or the Ruddy One. The first problem that faces us here is to ascertain who the latter is. Whitney, and some others, identify him with the sun itself, but it is fairly plain from the verses themselves that this Ruddy One is different from, and is a power superior to, the sun, whose powers are to a large extent deemed to be derived from the Ruddy One. The very first verse of Hymn 1 makes this clear, and this distinction is maintained throughout the remaining verses of this Book.

Hymn XIII.1 :

Whitney's translation of verse XIII.1.1 is as follows :

'Rise up, O powerful one (?vājin) that are within the waters, enter into this kingdom (that is) full of pleasantness ; the ruddy one (rohita) that generated this all—let him bear thee, well-borne unto kingdom.'

(Whitney).

Quite obviously, 'vājin' here is the sun, as Whitney deems it to mean; but 'the ruddy one' stands apart from the 'vājin' and is distinctly a separate entity, who in fact has generated the sun, etc.

The term 'rohita', the Ruddy One appears in some 18 out of the 60 verses of this hymn.

In verse 3, the Maruts are said to be able to catch his (the Ruddy One's) ears; in verses 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, are described the part played by 'rohita' in the creation of the Universe; in verses 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15, 'rohita' is shown as the power behind Agni and the sacrifices; in verse 16, rohita pervades the three worlds, of earth, heaven and antarikṣa; in verses 22, and 23, 'rohini' appears as the female counterpart of 'rohita' and is clearly there a 'Śakti' (not 'dawn' as Whitney surmises), (In another section of this work, I will have occasion to refer to another role in which rohini appears, namely that of an asterism); in verses 24, 25, 26 and 37, rohita is 'a shining, ghee drinking' power, that is Agni, who pierces the sky and appears in the form of the sun; in verses 37, 46, 47, 48, 49, 52 and 54, 'rohita' becomes 'the pillar of fire' (a Rg Vedic phrase) which is the centre of all sacrifices.

It is verse 3 which gives the first clue as to whom the phrase Ruddy One refers here. Maruts are intimately associated either with Rudra or Indra according to Rg Vedic mythology. The Ruddy One can here be only Rudra, since the other roles described in the preceding para fit him more aptly.

It is not very difficult to identify the sun in the remaining passages of these verses. There remain a few statements, such as for example that in verse 56, taking serious objection to 'urinating in the face of the sun' which does seem irrelevant here and may, therefore, be ignored. (Unless we interpret it as meaning one who has become a Rudra the sun can exercise no power). However, it is important that we identify 'the lord of speech' who is prayed to in verses 17, 18 and 19. It should in this context be either Rudra or the sun, or Savitar if we take note of verse 20, where Savitar is brought in by a phrase identical with that employed in the three preceding verses.

In verse 25, 'rohita' is said to be born again 'punar jāyate', as if he is a dvi-ja, a twice-born.

Hymn XIII.2 :

The term 'Ruddy One' (rohitah) appears in verses 25, 39, 40 and 41. In verse 25, he is called a 'tapasvin', who has gained his powers through 'tapas'; verse 39 calls him 'time', 'kāla', 'the mouth of sacrifices' (Agni), etc.; and in verses 40 and 44, 'rohita' is found wandering over the earth and ocean, and is himself the world. Besides these direct references, there are many indirect ones in the intervening verses, where he is called a 'bull' (or buffalo), mahiṣah, but this can well be a play on words, 'maha + isah' (mahēṣah, mahiṣah) meaning great lord.

Hymn XIII.3 :

All the 26 verses of this hymn carry an identical refrain which contains amongst other terms, the phrase 'O, Ruddy One'. In all these verses, the various qualities, and powers of the 'Ruddy One' are first described, and then he is asked to punish whosoever scathes a brahmin 'who knows thus' (ya evam veda), that is, one who has acquired the esoteric knowledge through which he has become one with the 'Ruddy One'. By and large, these qualities and powers of the Ruddy One, as enumerated in these verses are identical with those already noticed in Book XIII, and the first two hymns of this Book. The Ruddy One of this hymn is, therefore, undoubtedly Rudra-Śiva.

Hymn XIII.4 :

This hymn is divided into six paryāyas. Nowhere in this hymn does the phrase Ruddy One appear, and though all references are made to an indefinite 'he', the details of the verse make it clear, directly or indirectly, who this 'he' is. For example, verse 26 (in paryāya No. 3) says, in so many clear words, that 'he is Rudra'.

Paryāya 1 :

In this paryāya of 13 verses, 'he' is said to be Savitar, Dhātṛ, Agni, etc., and even Rudra, and finally, the assertion is made that it is by his entering into them that not only all these, but also everything that breathes or does not breathe, become what they are. He is, therefore, said to be 'ekvart', one only, the sole deva.

Paryāya 2 :

In 8 brief verses, the verses of this paryāya make emphatic declaration of his One-ness, and of his fame, glory etc. Verse 15 also declares that into anyone who 'knows' this—'ya evam devam ekavṛtam veda'—this deva will enter and endow him with 'power'.

Paryāya 3 :

This is a most extra-ordinary hymn and on account of its contents requires special and most serious notice. In the first two verses the glory, power and dominion of this deva are mentioned, and it is said that both worship, 'brahman', and 'tapas' belong to him. Moreover, of him it is said in the next 4 verses : (1) he is both death and immortality ; (2) he is both 'abhva' (great ?) and also rakṣas ; (3) he is Rudra, giver of food ; (3) in the sacrifice he is vaśat, the eater of food ; (5) all 'demons' (yātu) are under his control ; and finally (6) he rules over the asterisms as also the moon.

Here, we have a perfect picture of Rudra-Śiva in both his malevolent and benevolent forms.

Paryāya 4 :

There is nothing new in the 17 verses of this paryāya beyond detailing the paradoxical character of Rudra's powers, nature and attitude. His gift of herbs, rain, and prosperity to mankind are brought out, and he is said to be equally inclined to the evil man as well a good one, for an Asura as for a human being.

Paryāyas 5 and 6 :

The 11 verses of these 2 paryāyas are devoted to paying homage to this deva, namely Rudra. The only noteworthy feature is when he is identified with Indra himself on account of his strength and power.

Two special points brought out in this Book have to be noted.

First is Rudra's association with evil forces, and his support for them in equal measure with good ones.

Second is the emphasis placed upon Rudra's powers over the sun, whose implications will become clear in later sections of this work.

SECTION 9

VIṢṆU.

(Book XVII).

Book XVII which has only one hymn (of 30 verses) is called the 'viśāsahī' hymn; the first few verses commence with the word 'viśāsahīm' (victorious) and are addressed to Indra. However, as the hymn proceeds further the Sun, Sūrya, and Viṣṇu are brought together in a manner such as to treat all the three as one and the same power. The intention seems to be to reconcile conflicting sectarian disputes with the object of elevating Viṣṇu to the status of a mighty deity. The might and power of which Indra had been supreme become totally Viṣṇu's now. Similarly, the splendour, the propitious nature, the knowledge, the righteousness, the tapas (literally heat but figuratively power generated by yogic manipulation that is, bodily heat), the protection extended by royal rulership, etc., all of which had been attributes of Sūrya, are now transferred to Viṣṇu who, in the Rg Veda, is a minor solar power whose only noteworthy feature was the taking of three steps (trivikramah). There Viṣṇu appears also in the role of a relatively unimportant companion of Indra in the myth of the creation of space by Indra's destruction of Vṛtra. Suddenly now we find here, in the Atharva Veda, Viṣṇu displacing Sūrya and Indra and taking their place as the supreme power in all these matters.

There are many passages in the Atharva Veda where these three deities are either placed in juxtaposition or fused together. There, however, the syncretization is just hinted at or very gently suggested. It is in Book XVII that all these ideas, which look like being just preliminary forays reach their culmination. By absorbing within himself all of Indra's power, and Surya's regency, Viṣṇu has become the symbol of royalty at its highest and most supreme and consequently the patron deity of kings rājanyas, and kṣatriyas.

On the other hand, the Atharva Veda, as I show elsewhere in this work, puts up Rudra-Siva as the supreme power to whom the brahminical community look for counsel and protection, as

teacher, mystic, magician, physician, protector, saviour, generator of progeny, saint, patron of song and dance, ideal sexual model and embodiment of all priestly virtues.

Thus in the Atharva Veda, we find the innumerable devas of the Rg Veda cut down to size with the field left open to Viṣṇu, Rudra-Śiva and Śakti as the only powers to be reckoned with. In addition, we find a clear-cut demarcation of areas of influence, Viṣṇu as the presiding deity for the secular power and Rudra-Śiva for the sacredotal. The polarisation which is seen here for the first time in the religious literature appears in the almost complete form which it developed later. It was only over two thousand years later, that a rapprochement to a great extent and an elimination of this severe dichotomy was effected as a result of the great Revivalist Movement that began at that time.

The completeness with which this polarisation is set up between Viṣṇu and Rudra-Śiva in the Atharva Veda could only have reached this proportion after a long period of slow evolution. The Vedic literature themselves provide no direct evidence, but much can be inferred from the Rg Vedic myths. This aspect has been illustrated by me with a few examples in my work entitled 'Rg Vedic Studies.' This will be supplemented by a comprehensive study which I hope to undertake separately. As regards the role played by devils, or female powers in the Atharva Veda, information will be found elsewhere in this work.

A few of the verses in this book provide very interesting—and intriguing—details on matters not directly concerned with the up-lifting of Viṣṇu's status.

Whitney has translated verse 13 of this hymn in the following terms : "What body of thine, O Indra, is in the waters, what on the earth, what within the fire ; What of thine, O Indra, is in heaven gaining purifying one ; With what body, O Indra, thou didst permeate the atmosphere—with that body, O Indra, bestow thou protection on us—Thine, O Viṣṇu etc., etc." (XVII.13)

It is matter for conjecture as to why the Atharva Veda in this verse draws quite so much attention to the 'body' (tanū) of Indra. Interest in Indra has always been centred elsewhere round his weapon, the 'vajra'. Considering the Atharva Veda's bias to-

wards yoga and tantra, it would not be unreasonable to attribute these references to Indra's body (tanū) to the yogic and tantric view of the human body, and the role the senses (indriya) play in the development of these powers.

The highly metaphysical (or mystical?) verse XVII.19, seems to refer to Viṣṇu's role as creator and protector (but not destroyer). Unlike Rudra-Śiva, Viṣṇu never brings death to human beings, except the evil-minded.

Verse 22 illustrates the penchant of Vedic composers for word play, one type of which consists in bringing together words related by syllables even if not by meaning. For example, the words, 'virāj', 'samrāj' and 'svarāj' are all ingeniously brought into juxtaposition in this verse. Again, in verses 1 to 5, the homonyms 'sahī', 'saha', 'sāsah', 'śahī', etc. are again and again played about with. It illustrates the Sanskrit literati's love for sound effect. All Sanskrit literature (in fact, all Indian literature) has been, till recently, intended to be read aloud, and that has had a profound effect on the development of a keen musical ear in the people.

SECTION 10.

RUDRA, VIṢṆU, AND INDRA.

In the Rg Veda, the principal hero is Indra, and attention is focussed on his exploit, namely his fight with Vṛtra who is vanquished; but the struggle is a recurring one. In the Atharva Veda on the other hand, it is Rudra and his tapas on the cosmic and microcosmic scale which dominate the text. However, Indra also has a special part to play here, which in turn affects the role of Viṣṇu.

Tapas (or yoga) involves the control of the body by the spirit, and of blind force by knowledge and superior mental power, that is brahman. The deities who represent these elements and which are in opposition are Indra and Rudra respectively. Indra signifies the senses, indriyam, just as Rudra is associated with the spirit, brahman, ātman, yakṣa and so on.

Indra has in the Atharva Veda another role to play, which in the Rg Veda is not so clearly made manifest. He is the symbol of royalty, being the king or ruler par excellence, amongst the devas, and hence the paradigm for all earthly princes. The power by which he is enabled to play this part is called *kṣatram*. A clash between the sacred (brahman) and secular (*kṣatram*) powers becomes inevitable, and both the Vedas make it very clear that the king is subordinate to the brahmin.

The theory of the origin of *kṣatram* and brahman as powers is worked out in a subtle way and with incontrovertible definiteness. Brahman, whether called as such, or as *virāj*, or *Śakti*, is the original or ultimate source of all power, and of all existence whereas *kṣatram* is a gift of the sun, which itself is dependent on brahman (or *Aditya*, or *Virāj* or *Śakti* or *Vāk*).

Indra's weapon, *Vajra*, is the gift of the sun, being a manifestation of that power, or in another sense being the sun itself. In addition, Indra was successful in creating the three-tier space, namely earth, *antarikṣa* and the sky only because *Viṣṇu*, the lord of sun, was by his side. But, the sun itself is in the AV just one eye of Rudra. Moreover, Book XIII of the AV applies the term '*lohita*' (*rohita*, the red one), indiscriminately to the sun and to Rudra, as if they were in essence one and the same, but in separate manifestation; it is the latter, the *ekavṛt*, on whom the sun subsists. (vide especially *paryāya* 1 of Book XIII).

This leads to a basic problem, namely the relationship between the three deities namely, *Viṣṇu*, as the lord of the Sun, Indra, and Rudra. Book XVII resolves the issue in a neat way. It completes *Viṣṇu*'s total identification as a power or lord of the sun, simultaneously displacing Indra from his status as the symbol of royalty. This is the beginning of the end of Indra's status, which is complete only a few centuries after the so-called Vedic period, and is accomplished by the major Puranas and the two Epics. The very term Indra loses all significance beyond what is attributed to its derivative, namely, *indiriyam*, meaning the senses.

Thus, these two Vedic *samhitas*, namely the Rg and the Atharva, display the rise and fall of the devas, leaving the field clear for two of them, namely Rudra (as *Śiva* or *Skambha*) and *Viṣṇu*. However *Śakti* is present everywhere.

SECTION 11.

ATHARVAN AND ANGIRASA.

In the Atharva Veda, Atharvans and Āngirases form two distinctly different groups of priests, and they are the only ones of any importance here. The term 'brahman priest' does occur frequently, but they are not seen to be a third group, but just an alternative name applied indiscriminately. (Bṛgu's role, being minor, may be, for the time being only, over-looked).

The word 'brahman' applied to these two groups of priests in the AV signifies many things. When applied to their verses and prayers appearing in the AV, it seems to imply that it is to 'brahmā' that they are addressed, brahmā being conceived as a sort of superior deity identical with and, therefore, possessing all the characteristics of Rudra-Śiva the negative, as well as the positive, the beneficent as well as the malefic, aspects. It is from this close identification of the prayers with 'brahmā', that the priests themselves come to be called 'brahmāh', or more commonly 'brāhmaṇāh'. Thus, these priests of the Atharva Veda are pre-eminently brahmīns, a word which in those earlier times seemed to have been applied only to them.

The entire set of rites, prayers, magical practices, yoga and tantricism of those early years (generally referred to as 'knowledge of Brahmā or Brahmā-Vidyā') were the close preserve of these 'brāhmaṇs' or 'brāhmaṇs'; others such as hotṛs, udgaṛs, adhvaryus, etc. had no say in them, their sphere being limited to yajnas or sacrificial rituals. On the other hand, these 'brāhmaṇs' had the sole right to preside over the sacrificial rituals; in their role of supervisors at those rites, they directed the proceedings and corrected faults and deficiencies in their performance. The RV itself has one or two verses to show this, and the Brāhmaṇa literature is full of such references. Even the AV has some hymns which prove this position and authority of the brāhmaṇs in the sacrificial rituals.

The result of all this is that these brahmāṇs kept their 'brāhma vidyā' a close secret even after the compilation of the Atharva Veda. The 'brāhma vidyā' included not only theoretical know-

ledge but also practical applications of various kinds which could be classified broadly into two categories, namely the Samskaras on the one hand, and yoga and proto-tāntricism on the other. The former could not, on account of the universal need for them, be kept secret for long, and so they found their way, duly modified as various grhya sūtra texts into the other Vedic schools also. Tantra, however, has retained much of its secrecy even till today. First, the purely yoga portion was separated from the tāntric elements and made public, principally by Patanjali's Yoga Sūtra, but also through texts dealing with Sāṅkhya—Yoga and Vedantic philosophy as well as the more popular religious texts such as Bhagavad-Gīta. The tāntra elements developed very rapidly beyond the nascent stage in the form in which they appear in the AV through practice and through oral teaching, branching off into very many lines mostly outside the brahminical circles. The Śakti cults have, however, permitted some of these sects to be brought to public gaze and knowledge.

The term *br̥hama vidyā* enters into the literature very late, but the concept finds expression in cryptic words and phrases of a symbolic nature, such as cow, speech, weapon, bow and arrow, thunderbolt, etc.

There is functionally no differences between the Atharvans and the Āngirases. Both groups are found to be identical; nevertheless they exhibit serious differences in their historical and ethnical origin and leadership; there is every reason to believe that the Atharvans were the earlier group with the mythical Atharvan, identifiable in the text as Rudra, as their eponymous forebear. The Āngirases came in later under the leadership of the eponymous Br̥haspati. This legend seems to have ethnic associations involving linguistic and cultural assimilation and absorption. This *brahma vidyā* seems to have been originally an Asura cult.

Hymn IV.1 describes the coming into being, for the first time, of Father Atharvan, and later on Br̥haspati, the 'relative' of gods (*devabandhu*). The parents are Vena, the *brahma* and *yoni* (verse 1), from whom Agni is born (verse 4) and from Agni came Br̥haspati (verse 5). The latter is also a *brahman* priest (vers III.20.4).

In hymn V.2, 'Bṛhaddiva Atharvan' appeared as 'foremost heaven-winner, etc.' (verse 9), and as 'chief among beings' (verse 8), and this provides the principal factor in the cultural struggles which form the subject matter of verses 1 to 6.

Hymn V.11 is a dialogue between Atharvan and Varuṇa. In verse 3, Varuṇa maintains that his power (protection?) (Vrata) extends over both Ārya and Dāsa, and in verses 6 and 7, Atharvan attempts to wean away Varuṇa from the protection he extends to 'Panis of degraded speech' to which Varuṇa agrees, (verse 8), he being the 'generator of Father Atharvan' (verse 11).

According to VI.1.1. the gāyatri mantra belongs to the son of Atharvan' (Rudra?). That hymns VII.1, 2 and 3 imply that Atharvan is a Yogi as has been shown by me elsewhere in this work. Hymn VII.104 states that Atharvan's 'cow' was given to him by Varuṇa; the term cow is a cryptic symbol for 'brahma vidyā' as I have shown earlier. Bṛhaspati is said here to enjoy the companionship of Atharvan 'in shaping the body at will', which is clearly a t̃antric technique.

In verses X.10.12 and 13, the heavenly cow is said to have taken Soma, where Atharvan sat on a golden barhis. The meaning seems to be that it was the knowledge, 'brahma vidyā' of Atharvan which endowed success in the Soma sacrifice.

Verse 8 of hymn V.1 talks of the 'viṣṭha' (translated as shapes, or forms) of Varuṇa, and it is this same deva, apparently, who in verse 2 is said to have 'first attained (or enacted) the ordinances (dharma) and made many wondrous forms.' It seems to me that this is a reference to the caste organisation, 'many forms of beings', created by Varuṇa's dharma, the term 'varuṇāśrama dharma' probably being a corruption of 'varuṇāśrama dharma', an organisation created by Varuṇa.

In verses 26 and 27 of hymn X.2, Atharvan is said to be the creator (shaper) of men's mind and heart. It is, in verse 29, the stronghold of brahman (brahma), and by inference Atharvan it is who possesses the 'brahma vidyā'.

The Angirasa (Bṛhaspati) is prayed to remove evil thoughts (VI.45.3). According to verses VIII.17 and 24, Angirases are

acquainted with herbs and plants and their medicinal properties, a knowledge which is the preserve of Rudra-Śiva and his followers.

In verse X.1.6, the Āṅgīrasa appears as a 'purohita', practising witchcraft, and in verse 1, as a surgeon setting right joints.

In verses 9, 10, 12 and 16 of hymn XI.10, Bṛhaspati is shown as inducted into the 'brahma-vidyā' by Indra (verse 9) and applying it to set up the 'Asura destroying weapon Trishandhi' (which I have shown elsewhere is the same as Rudra-Śiva's triśūl).

Hymn XII.5, deals with 'the Brahman's Cow', which as verse 1 shows is 'the brahma-vidyā' acquired through tapas; in verse 52, this is referred to as 'the daughter of Āṅgīras'.

The Āṅgīrasas, along with Agni and Ādityas, are said to burn the godless piśācas, and to 'fasten (their hold) on them' in verse XII.3.43. This they are able to do because they are in possession of 'brahma vidyā'. Incidentally, we find that the 'piśācas' are called 'demons' only by way of figure of speech; they are seen to be actually 'godless' people, that is people of a different culture with which the Atharva Veda is in dispute.

SECTION 12.

OXEN, BULLS AND COWS.

Bulls and cows are over-worked symbols in the Vedas. The word cow has, even by Yāska's reckoning, at least 16 meanings, which have little or no relationship with the animal cow. Some more which have now been revealed seem to have escaped Yāska's attention. As for bulls, almost every deva attracts to himself the epithet 'bull' at some stage or another, and here at any rate the connection, however tenuous it may be, seems to stem from the fact that a bull is thought to be very prolific in casting his seed about. The devas are high above the earth constantly raining down favours on humanity and the earth as a bull sheds his seed on the cow. Somewhat similar analogy, namely the cow yielding its milk, may underly the use of it as a symbol in cases such as Vāk, speech, and the rays of the sun which are all in a way showering

prosperity on mankind. (I present another hypothesis in Chapter III for the symbol of the Bull in these myths).

However that may be, there seems to be another line of thought which has made cattle a favourite symbol in the Vedas. A clear indication to this effect appears in RV I.551.6, where the divine denizens of Viṣṇu's paradise (svarga) are termed 'many-horned and nimble oxen' and Viṣṇu himself is referred to as a bull.

Apparently, horns are the insignia of divinities in the Vedas, and the origin of the concept is to be traced to its counter-part on earth, namely the turban or any form of head-dress, such as the crown. This is an important sign of status and authority not only in the Vedas, but also in all ancient cultures. It is common enough in the middle-east cultures, contemporaneous with the Vedas; every sect in Hinduism throughout the ages has had this concept in common. We have many passages in the Vedas themselves where the turban makes its appearance as a sign of authority, for example, amongst the Vrātyas, and in funeral ceremonies. The crown and the diadem are its later successors. As in the case of Samson, power resides in the hair of the head.

The Ox :

There are two hymns in the Atharva Veda—besides some scattered passages—where the Ox makes its appearance as a figure of power. They are hymns IV.11 and IX.7 respectively. Verse 2 of the first mentioned hymn (IV.11.2) identifies the draft ox (anadvān) as Indra, and the reason why it does so is because Indra 'looks out for cattle' (that is, he leads the devas), and his wheel (cakra) goes in three directions, namely the past, the present and the future. One may justifiably hold that this is a very weak rationale for adopting this symbol. Opportunity is here taken (verse 3) to prohibit beef-eating. Verse 7 defines this particular ox in a curious way.

'Indra by form, agni by carrying, Prajāpati, Parameshtin, Virāj; in Vaiśvānara he strode, in the draft-ox he strode; he made firm, he sustained.' (IV.11.7)

The divine Ox turns out to be, therefore, a syncretized one. Verse 8 is still more interesting. It reads: 'That is the middle of the

draft-ox, where the carrying is set ; so much of him is in front as is put all together on the opposite side.' (IV.11.8)

Here, the hump, or perhaps the neck, is taken as the comparing point ; what is in front is the horn, and by what is ' the opposite side ' is to be taken to mean the sexual organ. We are, therefore, told that these are the power-centres of the ox. According to verse 10, ' his thighs (jangha) extract refreshing drink ' (Perhaps, this means that it is the energy which emanates from the movement of the Ox which energises the world, that is to say, the Śakti, power, that sets the world going is symbolically said to be in the Ox's thighs). (In verse X.10.21, there is a play on the words, Śakthi, meaning thigh, connecting it with ' veśa ' meaning Śakti).

The Ox appears again in hymn IX.7. Here, every part of the Ox is said to be some deva or other power, and the Ox itself turns out to be some deva or other according to the activity it indulges in. Here, the fore-legs are said to be ' mahadeva ' that is Rudra, his kidneys, anger, his testicles, fury and so on. This Ox is also a syncretized one.

In Hymn IX.4, we find a similar syncretized bull of all forms (viśvarūpa, verse 22). As verse 8 says : In him are brought together Indra's force (apparently in the horn), Varuna's two arms, Asvins' two shoulders, Maruts' hump and so on. As in the case of the other syncretized ox, various devas dwell in various parts of the body, which are often of a peculiar character.

Thus ' though a male (pumāns), yet he is pregnant, big (sthāvira)' says verse 6 ; here, perhaps a pun is intended on the double meaning of the word ' sthāvirah ' which also means an ascetic. Verse 16 talks of his possessing ' Sarama's claws (kusthikā)'. He is reddish in colour (verse 22), and ' he is a young male with whom women are asked to go about playing according to their will.' This seems to be a reference to Rudra's proclivities of this nature in the Athavar Veda, though in later times the mantle falls on Kṛṣṇa also.

SECTION 13.

SIMPLE PRAYERS.

The Atharva Veda has some 120 hymns which are just simple prayers to various devas, and devis, whose names are not in many cases mentioned. These are exclusive of the prayers which form part of Saṁskāra rites, and those which have been included in the category of magic, black or white. They are all in the first seven Books. The number of the hymn, the Book in which they appear and the deities addressed are as follows :

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. I.26 | —Rati, Bhaga, Indra, Szvitar, Maruts. |
| 2. I.30 | —Generally to Devas. |
| 3. I.31 | —Guardians of Quarters. |
| 4. I.32 | —Heaven and Earth. |
| 5. I.33 | —To Waters. |
| 6. II.16 | —To various Powers. |
| 7. II.10 | —For various gifts. |
| 8. II.35 | —Expiating errors in sacrifice. |
| 9. III.13 | —Waters. |
| 10. III.14 | —For blessings on kine (general). |
| 11. III.15 | —Success in Trade (general). |
| 12. III.16 | —Morning Invocation to various gods, especially Bhaga. |
| 13. III.17 | —Success in Agriculture. |
| 14. III.20 | —To Agni and other Devas. |
| 15. III.21 | —To various forms of Fire or Agni. |
| 16. III.24 | —Abundance of Grain. |
| 17. III.26 | —Gods of the Quarters. |
| 18. III.31 | —For Breath and Long Life. |
| 19. IV.2 | —To Ka. |
| 20. IV.21 | —To Bhaga, Indra, etc. for kine. |
| 21. IV.24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 39. | |
| 22. V.3 | —Various gods. |
| 23. V.12, 27 | —(Āpri-hymn) to various devas. |
| 24. V.24 | —To various gods. |
| 25. V.26 | —Accompanying a sacrifice. |

26. VI.22

—(Maruts), 23 & 24 (Waters), 33 (Indra), 34 (Agni), 35 (Agni Vaiśvānara), 36 (Agni), 41 (various devas), 47 & 48 (Maruts, Indra, etc.), 49 (Agni), 51, 53, 55, 61 & 62 (Vaiśvānara, for purification), 93, 98, 99, 107, 114 (disability in sacrifice), 115 (from sin), 116, 117, 118, 119, 120 & 121 (from guilt or obligation) Karma ?

27. VII.6

—(Aditi), 7 (Ādityas), 8 (Bṛhaspati), 9 (Pūṣan), 10 (Sarasvatī), 11 (Agni-Lightning for rains 14 to 16 (Savitar), 17 (Dhatr), 18 (For rain), 19 (Progeny—Prajāpati 'Dhatr), 20 (Anumati), 24 & 25 (Viṣṇu & Varuṇa), 26 (Viṣṇu), 27 (Idā), 29 (Viṣṇu & Agni), 30 (Anointing to Bṛhaspati and Savitar), 31 (Indra), 31 (Idā), 29 (Viṣṇu & Agni), 30 (Anointing to Bṛhaspati and Savitar), 31 (Indra), 31 (Indra), 32 (Soma), 33 & 34 (Agni-enemies), 43 (Soma and Rudra), 44 (Indra & Viṣṇu), 49 (Spouses of gods), 51 (Bṛhaspati & Indra), 53 (Aśvins), 54 (Veda), 55 (Indra), 57 (Sarasvatī), 58 (Indra & Varuṇa), 61 (Agni-penance-tapas ?), 62 & 63 (Agni-enemies), 66 (for knowledge), 67 (recovery of sense), 68 (Sarasvatī), 69 (for good fortune), 71 (Agni), 72 (Indra), 73 (Aśvins), 75 (for kine), 77 (Maruts), 78 (Agni), 82 (Agni) 83 (Varuṇa, for release from fetters), 84 (Indra and Agni), 86 (Indra), 87 (Rudra), 89 (Agni and Waters), 91 92 & 93 (Indra), 97 (accompanying a sacrifice to Indra), 98 (Indra), 99 (vedi) 117 (Indra.).

SECTION 14

CASTE AND OTHER MATTERS.

The Atharva Veda is quite familiar with the caste organisation according to the *varṇāśrama dharma*, and the names of the castes, such as *brāhmin*, *kṣatriya*, etc. At the same time, it still differentiates between the *Āryas* and *Dāsas* as standing in opposition to one another in cult and language.

However, the special concern of the mantras is the *brāhmin* priesthood, and to a lesser extent, the *kṣatriyas*. It strives earnestly to uphold their relative status, powers, authority and privileges, and insists that the primary function of the *kṣatriyas* and *rājanyas* is precisely to protect the *brāhmin*'s privileges. These privileges are of all kinds, not merely those arising from their role as *purohitas* and priests; they cover property, language, knowledge, education, and right of access to not only their wives drawn from their own caste, but to all women of the other castes, whether already married or not in the community to which they belong. The *kṣatriya* holds in all respects a subordinate but inseparable role.

Hymn XII.4 and 5 make clear the comprehensive nature of the *brāhmins*' claim to privileges and authority.

Hymn XII.4 makes use of the symbol of the cow to refer to the knowledge and power possessed by *brāhmins*, which may be called the '*brahma-vidyā*'. According to Verse 1, the *brāhmins* have achieved this power through *tapas* and righteous conduct. Verses 2 and 3 attribute to it the qualities of truth, glory, fortune, faith, etc. Verses 5 to 11 threaten with dire punishment a *Kṣatriya* who takes away the cow from the *brāhmin*, that is to say, it prohibits the acquiring of this *vidyā* by *kṣatriyas*. Verses 12 to 72 (that is, the rest of the verses) ride the symbolism very hard, (as if the 'cow' has become one in reality) going to the extent of attributing special powers to the 'cow' and threatening with all sorts of dire consequences a *kṣatriya* who attempts to acquire this 'cow' or '*vidyā*'.

Hymn XII.4 talks of the '*vaśā*' of the *brāhmin*, and here the symbol of the cow is extended to include not only their *vidyā*, but almost everything in the world which they may deem to be their

property. Here again, the symbol frequently becomes the reality, as if the particular property mentioned is a real cow.

The symbol 'cow' in verse XII.4.16 stands for a girl or a woman, and the purpose of the verse seems to be that once a girl begins to be able to speak, which will be after she reaches the age of 3 years, she becomes the property of a brāhmin, and must be treated as if she is held in trust for the brāhmin who may ultimately come to claim her. Otherwise, all sorts of penalties are likely to be incurred by the transgressors. (Verses 17 et. seq.). If more than one brahmin were to lay claim to her, she goes (verse 22) to him 'who knoweth thus' (apparently meaning one whose 'vidyā' is better). Verses 41 to 47 have something very interesting to say, the symbolic meaning having here changed from 'woman' to language and speech.

Various cows, that is language in different forms, are thought of, in verse 41, as arising out of sacrifice, and Nārādā, a sort of go-between of the devas and human beings, is said to have kept 'vilipti' to himself. This word 'vilipti' literally means 'smeared over', but here it means 'written script', formed by smearing dark liquid over material (palm-leaf, wooden piece, etc.) scratched over by writing symbols. In verse 42, Nārādā assures the devas that this 'vilipti' is the best cow, that is to say, 'writing' is superior to spoken language. From verses 43 and 44, we learn that only the most precious and holy material is reduced to writing (here obviously the Vedas), and that only the brahmins can be permitted to learn. A non-brahmin who attempts to learn it should be crushed (verses 45 and 46), and following verse 52, it would be Rudra who would punish him. This indicates that 'the brahma vidyā', and the Vedas in general, are under the protection of Rudra.

Verse 47 describes in clear terms the nature of different forms of speech :

'Three verily are the kinds of cow ; the 'vilipti', she has given birth to (such) a cow, the simple cow, vāśā ; these one should present to the priests (brahman), (then) he falls not under the wrath of Prajāpati'.

(XII.4.47)

From the written material (vilipti) comes the brāhmins' speech (sūta vāśā) and from that comes ordinary speech (the simple vāśā).

All this belongs to the brāhmins. So says this verse 47. In our terminology, this would mean that the ordinary speech of the brahmins is 'Sanskrit' which is derived from 'Vedic Sanskrit', the best form of which is written down.

This would seem to indicate that some kind of writing was in existence by the time that the Vedas were reduced to the form in which we have them at present.

Further information regarding the privileges of brahmins are to be found in hymns V.17, 18 and 19. These rights accrue to them because of the power generated within themselves by acquiring the brahma-vidyā (that is by undergoing a course of studies as a Vedic Student). Due to this he has become (verse 5) a 'limb of the gods.'

Hymns 18 and 19 merely repeat the various points already discussed as occurring in hymns XII.4 and 5, and V.17.

SECTION 15.

MAGIC, MEDICINE AND TANTRISM.

In every religious rite, or even simple prayer, there is involved more or less some element of magic. Man prays, or has recourse to religion, when he desires that something should happen which but for the prayer would not happen. That is to say, he seeks to influence the normal course of events through the religious exercise, and believes that he will succeed in doing so. That is also what constitutes the essence of magic. Religion is, therefore, a special kind of magical procedure. The miracle is dignified magic.

A distinction as to what is magic and what religion can only be made on the quality of magic involved in the secular and religious rites. This is purely a question of judgment, which can be tilted one way or other according to the prejudiced interest of the observer. There is always a conscious belief, or a sub-conscious feeling, in terms of which one's own religion or sect is thought to be free of all magic, while that of others is deemed to be full of appeals to magic, superstition and the miraculous. A similar prejudice

affects the distinction between black and white magic. A simple criterion of distinction between the two is for whose benefit the magical element is resorted to. Whatever benefits oneself is white magic, and whatever harms another is black magic.

In Hinduism, the problem is further complicated by yoga and t̃āntricism. These practices are not dependent upon faith or belief in the existence of any deity, or any evil power. They are essentially body and mind control exercises, but it is believed—and often actually demonstrated—that through them the practitioner can attain miraculous powers over nature, and perform acts which are indistinguishable from successful performance of the magical art.

It is in this light that the Atharva Veda has to be read. Superficially, it looks as if it is all sorcery, and black magic, or the medical art based on magical principles and practices. But this superficial veneer hides a consistent and well organised system of yoga and tantrism. The cloak is provided by various symbols, and myths, the keys to which can be found in the text itself though it involves diligent and somewhat tiresome search.

As in the case of the Rg Veda, the text is full of what appear at first sight as disjointed and unconnected myths. In both cases, however, demythologization produces a result in which they all fall into a well-co-ordinated and articulated ensemble. In the case of the RV the myths concern various devas who are products of jyoti. The Atharvan on the other hand while providing oblique references to those myths, focusses attention on man, and his place in the Universe. It has set up an intimate and close relationship between man as a corporeal person (which includes his mental activities) and his spiritual nature. It is the latter which is the essential reality, the former being merely a phenomenon, a 'becoming' reality. The two are, to adopt the text's own imagery, the web and woof out of which the universe is woven as a single piece, in which the individual man appears as only a piece or unit of the larger pattern, both being identical in design. The homologisation between Rudra as the embodiment of the Universe and ordinary man is the principal myth and the total story of the Atharva Veda.

From these matters, it would be reasonable to conclude that the foundations of the text lie in a culture in which sorcery, and

the back arts constituted the principal religious element, and these were resorted to on account of the mysterious air of awe and fascination exercised by ecstatic practices induced either by drugs or abnormal psychological conditions. It was but natural that the art of healing of mental and bodily ills as well as of driving out of misfortunes should have got itself attached to these practices. One of the ancient cultures of this nature, which is not completely extinct even now, is that which is prevalent in Central Asia, known as 'shamanism', and which has given its name to practices of this kind wherever, and whenever, prevalent. The 'shaman' is the medicine man, and sooth-sayer par excellence. Elements of 'shamanism', such as for example 'fire-walking', exist everywhere even to-day.

Shamanism is, therefore, the original base of the Atharva Veda, as indeed it is that of all religions. In the course of their progress, societies have succeeded in eliminating, to a greater or less extent, shamanistic elements from their religion. The nature and course of historical evolution have differed from society to society. Vedism and Hinduism possess various unique features in this respect. Even before reaching the stage of codification in the Vedas, the shamanistic element had developed many of these features, of which only two need be referred to here. On the one hand, progress towards the evolution of true, that is speculative, religion went on so rapidly as to reach the highest level which is reflected in the Rg Veda. On the other hand, the essence of shamanism, namely sorcery, sooth-saying and medicine produced strange results. Out of sorcery grew yoga and tantrism, out of sooth-saying came stellar or nakṣatra forecasting and reading of omens, and the medicine man became a true doctor in Ayurveda. The Atharva Veda compresses all these three under the superficial layer of primitive shamanism which revolves round the strange figure of Rudra-Siva.

At the superficial level, it would be quite legitimate to read the text literally. When, for example, specific herbs and plants are referred to as healing elements, it would not be fantastic to go in search of these even though their identification has become difficult. At the same time, the Atharvan text itself, by pointedly identifying Rudra in some of its verses with plants and herbs in general, is revealing the esoteric knowledge that the healing arts

were practised in the Rudra cult. That is the auspicious, or kindly, part of Śiva. The arrow is also revealed by the text as a symbol of Rudra, and that is the hostile or malefic part of Rudra.

Step by step, the esoteric Rudra cult is revealed first as yoga, and then as true tantrism, both as the left-handed (*vāmācāra*) and the right-handed in which *devī*, as *Śakti* (whose power is sometimes given the separate name of *brahman* or *virāj*) plays the expected important part. (*Puruṣa* is the counterpart of Rudra-Śiva in the *Rg Veda*, but there he serves as the sacrificial base and not the tapasic base of the origin of the universe. This differentiation serves as a convenient foundation for building up a polarisation between Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, the beginnings of which are noticeable even in the *Rg Veda*).

Yoga and tantrism are not, strictly speaking, religions, as that term is commonly understood. They attempt to take man beyond the realms of contentious religions into the realm of spirituality. It cannot, however, be said that except in the case of very few individuals they have succeeded in this effort. The basic nature of man, it appears, is incorrigible. But these are matters that do not concern a commentary on the Atharva Vedic text.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF HYMNS—BOOKS I TO XIII.

1. *Book I (analysis) :*

Book I contains 35 hymns of 149 verses in all, each hymn, excepting 5, being made up of 4 verses. The exceptions are hymns nos. 3, 7, 11, 29 and 34 which contain 9, 7, 2, 6 and 5 verses respectively. On the face of it, there appears to be practically no connection between the subject matter of the various hymns, or even between the verses in the same hymn, nor can any system be traced in the arrangement of the hymns. The language is such as to make one fall readily into the trap of treating the whole matter as nothing but magic. But on analysis, it is seen how superficial and fallacious such a view must be deemed to be. A verse-by-verse study reveals the deep and esoteric meaning which forms part of the brahma-vidyā of the Atharva Veda.

Hymn 1 :

This is an invocation to Vācaspati, who in the Vedic environment must be deemed to be the Lord of Speech and of Sound in all its varieties. It is a term which elsewhere in the Vedas has been applied directly to Soma and Viśvakarma, and on a tangential view it may be extended to Brhaspati, as the lord of songs, and even to Rudra, whose bow Vāc claims to bend. From verse 2 of this hymn, and 2 and 4 of hymn II, where Rudra's symbols of the bowstring and the arrow are referred to, we may conclude that Rudra is the Vācaspati invoked here. In verse 2 of this hymn itself (namely, hymn I) 'vāsoṣpate' is invoked along with 'vācaspati'. The former appellation belongs rightly to Agni, who in certain contexts is merely an aspect of Rudra.

So, it would seem quite justifiable to identify the vācaspati of this hymn with Rudra.

Further arguments to strengthen this conclusion are provided by the rest of this hymn. The 'triple seven wearing every shape and form' would refer to the twenty-one musical notes, of which

Vāc is the mistress (as I have shown in my *Rg Vedic Studies*), and would, therefore, imply that Rudra is the lord of the 'divine intelligence' referred to in verse 2, and further confirmed by the 'two bow-ends strained with cord' of verse 3. The 'Śrutam' (meaning sacred knowledge, or in other words *brahma-vidyā*) of verses 3 and 4 makes the whole position clear. This hymn is, therefore, to be seen as an invocation to Rudra to confer '*brahma-vidyā*' on the worshipper. It presents a striking contrast to the opening hymn of the *Rg Veda* invoking Agni as the hotṛ of *yajna* sacrificial ritual.

Hymn 2 :

The 'shaft' (*śarah*) of verse 1 is undoubtedly the 'pillar of fire' that stands supporting the sky above the earth. This is the symbol which forms the subject matter of verse 2. The 'bowstring' of this verse represents, on the one hand, the power of Rudra, and on the other, the sacred cord which is worn as '*yajnopaviṣṭam*' of brahmins. In that capacity, it is a symbol of the '*brahma-vidyā*' which confers supernatural powers on the wearer, making his body as firm and strong as a 'stone'. It protects him from all evils and evil forces, and even (verse 3) wards off the death missile (*Śaram didyūm*) of Yama. Indra is invoked here as the guardian of the human body, on account of his possession of the special powers necessary for this purpose. In verse 4, it is the '*munja*' grass—an important item in the rituals—which represents the point of the arrow (the 'pillar of fire' or *skambha*) of Rudra and which symbolises the flow of knowledge and the removal of '*avidyā*' or ignorance. Ignorance is viewed as an illness, and its removal as a sort of flux or outflow of fluids of disease.

The purpose of this hymn is quite obviously to induce faith and strengthen the resolve of the supplicant in the ritual for attaining knowledge (*brahma-vidyā*).

Hymn 3 :

The verses addressed to the shaft (*śaram*), that is Rudra, associates him with Mitra, Varuṇa the Moon, and the Sun. The whole exercise is to ensure the purification of all the inner elements of the body. It may be recalled here that in yoga and tantrism, this function is assigned to these powers as the divinities presiding over the various organs and *nādis* in the human body.

Hymns 4 and 5 :

These two hymns indicate the purpose of the inner purification referred to in hymn III. The Waters (ambā), a mystical term not to be confused with the water of ordinary occurrence, constitute one of the essential elements which, having 'supreme control over man' (V.4) will bring along with 'madhu' and water (paya) (of the ordinary kind) heavenly bliss (mayobhu, V.1) to the suppliant in due course. (The terms 'madhu' and 'rasa', used usually in connection with soma juice, emphasise that this bliss is of the immortal kind, 'madhu' being a symbol of the immortality that lies at Viṣṇu's feet, and being also a gift which is in the power of Aśvins to confer on mankind—vide my 'Rg Vedic Studies Part III.' (Verse IV.3, by referring to 'amṛt', places this beyond doubt. Hymn IV divides the channels in the human body, (elsewhere referred to as nādis) into two kinds, those under the control of the Sun and the Moon, ('the companion of the Sun', vide IV.2) whose powers are described as being respectively of the equine and bovine nature (verse IV.4). The words 'adhvariātām'—verse IV.1, and 'adhvaryu'—verse IV.2, make it clear that a ritual is under way; the ritual is not a sacrificial yajña, and can, therefore, only be a tantric tapas, where the sacrifice is 'interiorized.'

Hymn 6 :

This hymn more or less repeats what is said in the preceding two. It makes it clear that the 'wealth' that is sought in this ritual is of the 'tapasic' kind and that for this purpose the body has to be kept healthy and pure.

Hymns 7 and 8 :

In these two hymns, efforts are made to wipe out the 'kimidjins' and the Yātudhānas. The principal deva appealed to is Agni as Jātaveda (the 'Knower') and, in passing, Soma and Indra as also the divine priest Bṛahaspati are referred to. In the context of the Atharva Veda, these are all,—unless the contrary is clearly specified,—powers interiorized within man. Of them, Agni operates from the most interior quarters, being the deity presiding over the internal sacrifice, namely tapas. Consequently, those forces which are sought to be eliminated with the aid of Agni must be regarded as evil powers within man himself, that is to say, they are aspects of

his conscious and subconscious self which stand as obstacles to the performance of his tapas. They are, as I have pointed out elsewhere, respectively 'doubt or lack of faith' and 'tendency to go to the extreme in asceticism.' Unless exterminated, they both are likely to lead man away from the correct and straight path of yoga in tapas.

Hymn 9 :

This is a hymn sung, like most of the others in this Book, by the guru. (It would not be correct to call him a priest). The deity addressed is principally Agni, the others such as Indra, Pūṣan, etc., being merely added in a routine sort of way. The role of Agni in this type of ritual has been explained under the preceding two hymns. The one specially noteworthy statement of this hymn is to be found in verse 3, where Agni Jātavedas is said to have 'brought milk to strengthen Indra.' This could only mean that the mightiest physical powers can be got only by means of 'brahma-vidyā', of which Agni is the 'knower' (Jātavedas).

Hymn 10 :

This is a hymn to Varuṇa, who is the lord of truth (satyam) and of dharma (verse 3). In that capacity Varuṇa 'binds' down men. It is from this bondage that men are freed (munc) (through the power of brahma-vidyā). The bondage is said to be 'due to a great surging flood of sin' committed by man, and a 'brahman' (magical prayer) is addressed to Varuṇa (verse 4). We are nowhere, throughout the Vedas, told what this sin consists of, beyond mention of 'falsehood and evil spoken with the tongue' (for example verse 3 here), or what is the type of bondage which the 'noose' creates, or also what is the kind of freedom that man obtains when freed from this bondage, or still again through what mechanism this freedom is achieved by means of 'brahman' prayer. In the context and general spirit of the Vedas, we can only conclude that (1) freedom is immortality, (2) bondage is mortal life, (3) Varuṇa's noose is that which ties down the soul to the body, (4) 'falsehood and evil spoken with the tongue' refers to man's involvement in worldly affairs to the neglect of concern for the 'spiritual truth' which is knowledge of 'the eternal things' and the pursuit of 'eternal ends' and (5) brahma-vidyā frees man from Varuṇa's noose by turning man's mind, thought, and body away from the

'false' things of the worldly life to the ultimates of eternity, the 'pure' things. These being the objectives of the 'tapas', a special hymn addressed to Varuṇa is considered appropriate.

Hymns Xs, 12 and 13 :

These three hymns together deal, as seen from a superficial reading, with the birth of a child. But such a rendering would make many points in the text meaningless, e.g., the reference to the four regions in Hymn XI, or to 'the red bull' in Hymn XII.1, etc. A search for the esoteric meaning must, therefore, be instituted.

Hymn XI refers not to the physical birth but to the ritual re-birth, (the dvija of the brahmācārin). That is why the deva, Aryaman, is asked to act as the hotṛ (verse 1), and the devas are said to bring the new-birth from the four regions of the sky and the earth (verse 2), who are the father and the mother of the transformed and sanctified spirit; the 'woman' of verses 1 and 2, (the mother) is the ritual spot which has to be 'prepared' for the ritual.

Hymn XII, in verse 1, refers by the 'red bull' to Agni, who is the first born 'babe' of the universe, and who has 'three births' (being trita) and who splits himself into 'three gunas' or aspects, 'tredha'). The main purpose of this hymn are two; firstly, Agni as the lord of the ritual of tapas and initiation, leading to the second birth of the initiate, is requested to bless and protect him; secondly, the body and spirit of the re-born brahmācārin are homologized with those of Agni or Rudra, the brahmin of the Universe.

Hymn XIII follows up the points made by the preceding one; the reference to 'the Arrow' in verse 4, or the 'offspring of the Flood' (in verse 2 and 3) make it clear that it is Agni as (Rudra-Siva) who is being prayed to for protection and blessings, and in Verse 1 for conferment of immortality and the warding off of doubt and loss of faith.

Hymn 14 :

This hymn is in the nature of an allegory. Under the guise of narrating the funeral ceremony of a woman, it is really describing the entry of the brahmācārin into his second birth; the 'woman' must be here taken as referring to the soul or spirit (ātman) which

has become enshrined in the rejuvenated state in the human body. It must be remembered that the brahmacārin is always referred to in the AV as 'death's student', which clarifies the meaning of verse 2 of this hymn. The entire hymn is the utterance of the 'guru'.

Hymn 16 :

The interpretation of this hymn, as well as that of many others in the AV where the word makes its appearance, turns upon the meaning of the word, 'Sīsa'. Commentators take it to refer to the metal 'lead', which, far from clarifying the sense of the relevant verses, adds to the confusion. It will be seen from the dictionary of Monier-Williams that (a) the derivation of the word is doubtful, and (b) it more specifically means the leaden weight used by weavers. Also the same authority indicates that the roots, 'si' and 'siv' are connected with sewing, threads, fetters, etc. We must, therefore, assume that, either the word 'sīsa' is derived from a lost root, or that in the Vedic times, it was, by folk etymology, used in the weaving community to refer to the thread itself as holding up the leaden weight. Thus with some justification we may take this word to mean 'thread' whenever it appears in the AV. Accordingly hymn XVI may be taken as referring to the sacred cord (yajnopavīṣṭa) of the brahmins, blessed and given by Varuṇa, Agni and Indra (verse 2) and that its power is so great as to destroy all the enemies of the brahmins (verses 3 and 4). As for verse 1, it seems to signify that the ceremony (of initiation) takes place on new-moon night.

Hymn 17 :

This is one of the less difficult hymns to interpret, once we have a general idea of the spiritual message of the AV. As the previous hymns have more than broadly hinted, we are in the midst of a yoga-tapas initiation session, and this verse refers to one of the most important exercises to be carried out at an early stage, namely the control (yama) of the nādis, the blood and breath vessels inside the human body, as conceived in yoga-physiological system. The terms 'robes of ruddy hue' in verse 1, and 'vessels charged with blood' in verse 3, serve to confirm this interpretation. The 'mighty rampart built of sand' of verse 1 must be seen as a mere

metaphorical expression of the control (yama) that has been placed upon the flow within the nādis.

Hymns 18 and 19 :

The first of these hymns savours somewhat of magic in that it purports to ward off all unlucky signs and omens.

The second, namely hymn number XIX, seeks Rudrg's protection (verse 3) against hostile forces, human and divine (verse 4 also). The last hemistich, 'My nearest, closest mail is "brahman"', is reminiscent of Hymn 75 of Bk VI of the Rg Veda. It is clear from the appeal to 'brahman' (here brahma-vidyā) that the missiles of the hostile forces are of a non-material nature.

Hymns 20 and 21 :

There is nothing special in these hymns, which only carry forward the general supplication contained in hymn XIX, with this addition, namely, that Soma, the Maruts, Varuṇa and Indra are all brought into the picture.

Hymn 22 :

This is an allegory which, under the guise of treating an illness having the symptom of turning the skin yellow, is in fact referring to the exercise of controlling (yama) the nādis. One of the two principal nādis is, it must be remembered is called 'pingalā' meaning yellow. A similar symbolism has, with less secretiveness, found expression in hymn XVII above. A more esoteric significance may also perhaps be there, namely the Red referring to the Idā (Sun) nādi and Yellow to the Pingalā (Moon) nādi.

There is still another, and more plausible, explanation. In tantrism, as we know it from later times, the five colours, white, red, yellow, black and green play very significant roles in many rituals and more especially in the drawing of maṇḍalas. Still more importantly the novice when he comes before the guru for initiation is expected to come dressed in white, and perhaps in ancient times yellow was permissible in place of white. After initiation his vesture has to be of red or black (or even sometimes green), but never of white colour. It is these concepts, expressed by the colour symbols, which, in this and the following three hymns, are apparently intended to be conveyed esoterically.

Hymns 23 and 24 :

The colour symbolism which was discussed under the preceding hymn (XXII) reappears here, but set in a different type of environment. The first point of difference lies in the invocation being addressed to a plant (in sing. in XXIII.1, and in the plural in XXIV.1). The prayer is that the white and light colours (XXIII.2, XXIV.2, etc.) be replaced by black, which is the colour of the plant itself, and which is called 'rajani' (night), Āsuri (an asura woman), 'śyāmā' (dark one) and so on. That night is intended here is made clearer by XXIV.1 where the strong-winged bird (the sun) is said to have driven the Āsuri to flight (to darkness). She is said to have taken the shape and form of plants. Plants (auṣadhi, vīrudh, etc.) in the Vedas are subjects into which Agni (as Vasu) is said to have entered. Metonymically, plant becomes Agni or Rudra, rajani (night), Āsuri, etc.; being the Śakti of Rudra (the dark kālī) also acquiring the appellation of plant. Thus, these two verses imply the invocation of Śakti, the consort and the personalised form of Śiva's Power, for the purpose of ensuring the success of the tapas.

Hymn 25 :

The key to this hymn lies in the word 'takman' which commentators translate, on very slender grounds, as fever, no two authorities agreeing on what kind of fever it could be. The matter is complicated by verse 4 which 'pays homage' to this takman, and by its being called the 'son of Varuṇa' in verse 3. At present, I am unable to give a satisfactory solution to this problem, beyond suggesting that it is a 'fever' caused by Rudra-Śiva—and also removed by him—of the nature of 'kāma' or desire, the primary evil of life.

Hymn 26 :

This is a simple invocation addressed principally to the Maruts, but also Indra, Bhaga and Agni ('Offspring of the Flood', verse 3).

Hymn 27 :

One thing is clear about this hymn. There is nothing in it, or in its wording, to connect it in any way with magic, black, white or medicinal. Nevertheless, it remains a very difficult piece to interpret.

The initial clue seems to come from the word 'nirjarāyavah' meaning here new-born, and, therefore, referring to the newly initiated brahmācārins. The 'trissapta' would refer to the Maruts (as explained earlier under verse I.1.1). They are here 'sons of Rudra', in the role of 'brahmācārins', as initiates into the cult of Rudra through the brahma-vidyā. Following this line of thought, we must read the second line of verse 1 as referring to steps to be taken to ward off unauthorised intruders into the ceremony. This is done by means of Power, seen as Śakti in verse 4-line 1, emanating from the novitiates. The rest of verses 2 and 6 indicate that many of those who had come for initiation have failed to make the grade, and discarding them, attention is concentrated by the hymn on those who have passed through the preliminary test. The whole company, including the guru, now set off (verse 4) to the shrine of Rudra, headed by some symbol representing Śakti (perhaps a trīśūl) who, as Indrāni, has gained control over the senses.

Hymn 28 :

This hymn merely repeats what has been said by Hymns VII and VIII which have been already interpreted earlier.

Hymn 29 :

The term 'maṇi' means in general a gem, or any precious thing, not necessarily an 'amulet'. In the context of the Atharva Vedic verses, especially in this hymn, it would be more appropriate to take it as symbolising the power (brahman) derived from brahma-vidyā.

Hymns 30 and 31 :

These are apparently some of the concluding prayers, for the protection and prosperity of the newly initiated brahmācārins, uttered by the 'guru' at the impending close of the ceremony.

Hymn 32 :

In this hymn, the guru affirms that the neo-initiate will in due course attain full mastery of the brahma-vidyā (verse 1, first line). The second line of the 1st verse, and the whole of verse 2, reveal that the Plant (Rudra, as explained in the commentary on hymns I.23, and 24, above) is situated 'not on earth or in heaven' (verse 1), but in 'midmost air', that is in antarikṣa (atmosphere), the region

ruled by Rudra. Verses 3 and 4 refer to the 'skambha', the form in which, as the All (Viśvam), that is Rudra encompasses the universes.

Hymn 33 :

This is an invocation to the waters, the Śakti, which flows in antarikṣa. The various myths connecting it with Agni, Varuṇa, etc., as in the Rg Veda, are referred to in the verses of this hymn.

Hymn 34 :

The Plant of verse 1 is Rudra, whom this term symbolises as already explained. As for madhu (ordinarily translated as 'honey') it is the symbol of the immortal bliss (ānanda) which is the ultimate achievement of tapas, or tantrism. Rudra who is in eternal tapas is always enjoying this bliss, and the ordinary tapasvins when they have reached the final stages leading to samādhi are also soaked with this 'honey'. The sugarcane is a symbol of Rudra, and the tapasvin says in verse 5, that through that deity's aid, he is sure that this bliss, (ānanda) kāmīnī, will never leave him.

Hymn 35 :

This is the guru's final benediction. By 'the ornament of Gold' (verse 1) is meant the sacred cord, which has now been bound on the brahmacārin. The various benefits conferred by it on the wearer, and the powers that he is now in a position to wield are inventoried in verses 2 and 3. The statement that 'with monthly and six-monthly times and seasons and the full year's sweet essence do we fill thee' signifies that the brahmacārin has been homologized with Prajāpati, (here Rudra), who is 'lord of the seasons', that is to say, the universe itself.

2. Book II (analysis) :

Hymns II.1 and 2 :

This hymn explains the metaphysical base of the brahma-vidyā. Vena is the Gandharva, Viśvāvasu, who is the same as Rudra (Verses II.1 and 2). He is the 'one who knows' the mysteries of creation. 'Three steps which are hidden' (verse I.2) refers to the universe being divided into four parts (vide 'Puruṣa Sūkta', as pointed out by Weber) of which man knows only one here on

earth. It may, however, also mean that 'consciousness' is at four levels, namely, the one which man knows ordinarily, and three which are 'sleep with dreams, dreamless sleep, and deep sleep (turiya)' of the Yogic analysis. 'Father's father' points to Agni or Rudra, as I have explained in my 'Rg Vedic Studies.' (The term 'father's father' echoes the concept of the father being re-born as the son who does the Śrāddham). 'The first-born son of Order' (verse 4) also refers to Agni, (see my 'Rg Vedic Studies'). Rudra is 'the only deva who must be worshipped' (verse 2.2). The 'Apsarases' (verses 2.3 and 2.5) are 'the nakṣatras', 'Gandharva's wives' (verse 2.5), who float in the 'Waters' (verse 2.3) of the mid-heaven. They are 'haunters of darkness', that is the night, (verse 2.5), 'dice-lovers', (akṣa-kāmā) that is, they are like the beads, (akṣa) that hang on the chest of Rudra. (Note 'tantum vitatam', thread of Order, etc. in verse 2.5). (Another explanation for the three which are hidden, and the fourth that is manifest, may be found in the three heavenly sound which are hidden, and the fourth the 'vaikāri', the ordinary speech; this is a tantric concept.).

Hymn II.3 :

Here 'good medicine', 'healing balm', (verse 1) 'Plant' (verse 6), etc. refer to Rudra's 'brahma-vidyā' and by synecdoche to Rudra himself. The first hemistich of verse 3 which reads as 'The Asuras bury deep in earth this mighty thing that healeth wounds' apparently refers to Rudra being the lord of nights. (Asuras here as in many other contexts signify the stars of the night, Rudra himself being an Asura in the Atharva Veda).

Hymn II.4 :

If 'Jangida-maṇi' is to be taken as referring to a plant worn as a sort of amulet—as it is considered to be by most scholars—it must, in my opinion, be a sort of plant-seed like 'akṣa' worn as a 'Rudrākṣa mālā' on the neck by Śaivites. (cf 'janga' meaning roaming).

Hymn II.5 :

This is an invocation to Indra, and a recital of his heroic deeds. There seems to be an esoteric meaning here, namely Indra's conquest and control of body, and of passions.

Hymn II.6 :

This is an invocation to Agni, who, as verse 3 says, has been 'elected' by the brahmins to be their chief. The term 'sacred chamber' refers to the sacred inner chamber of the human body, which would, in Atharva Vedic anatomy and physiology, be the cerebral cavity. In verse 1, we find references to time and space as constituting together the universe over which Agni presides.

Hymn II.7 :

The 'Plant' (vīrudh) here refers to Rudra, who is the healer of the body—and of the mind too. Verse 3 says 'Spread on the surface of the earth, downward from the heaven thy root descends.' This is a reference to the descent of Agni from heaven to earth, and his entering into the plants on earth where he takes residence as Vasu, vide my 'Rg Vedic Studies.' As mentioned there, this Agni becomes the Pillar of Fire here, designated as 'the Plant' with roots above (in heaven) and branches on earth.

Hymn II.8 :

In this hymn, the basic concepts are, firstly, that the body (kṣetra), binds down the soul (implied); 'plague', and 'inherited disease' (kṣetriyasya) are terms applied to the state of the soul bound by the body. Rudra (the Plant), the healer, is thought of as 'releasing' (munc) the body from this 'bondage'. The nakṣatra 'mūla-bharani' (tail of the scorpio) is poetically treated as the residence of this Plant. 'Mūla' also means root, which accords with this concept. The name 'vicṛtau' meaning 'the two releasers' is also very apt for the Plant (Rudra) which is said to 'release' from the 'kṣetriya' disease (the bondage) as 'tawny brown' (babhru), etc.. Verse 3 is also very apt as signifying the association with Rudra, the 'babhru'.

Hymn II.9 :

The key to this hymn lies in verse 1. It refers to a 'daśavrikṣa' who, as I have clarified in my Rg Vedic Studies, is identifiable with the evil aspect of Time. Hence, the whole purport of this hymn is to ward off the onslaughts of 'time', which is seen as a 'destroyer' or a 'slayer'. This is the other, the 'destructive' side of Rudra, as Kāla, the 'auspicious' side being the 'vīrudh' (Tree) also of Verse 1. (The synonym for 'vīrudh' would be

'vrkṣa', the Tree, which contrasts with 'daṣavrkṣa' illustrating the skill of the composer in the word-play thus involved.).

Hymn II.10 :

The most important concept in this hymn is that of 'Varuṇa's noose' which, as I have pointed elsewhere, is a symbol of the bondage to which the soul is subjected by the body. It is this association which leads to the various types of diseases mentioned in the hymn as also to the 'sin' (āgasam) (verse 1), from which the individual is freed (munc) and made 'guiltless' (anāgas). (The translation of the word 'āgas' as 'sin' is not quite apt. 'Āgas' is the 'corruption', 'impurity' which the soul undergoes by being linked to the body. This is a Hindu concept for which there is no exact equivalent in the foreign languages.) The person effecting this release is the 'guru'—the speaker of this hymn. Quite obviously, the occasion is the entering into 'brahmācārin-hood' of the initiate.

Hymn II.11 :

The first verse makes it clear that two opposing forces ('dart against dart') are involved here. The superior force is referred to as 'destroyer of destruction' (verse 1), 'śraktya pratisara' (verse 2) 'a prince' and 'giver of speech' (verse 4), and, 'heavenly lustre', (verse 5). All this points to the 'sacred cord', the symbol of the possession of 'brahma-vidyā', the giver of 'splendour' etc. (Śraktya is etymologically related to śraj, which among other things connects with chaplets, wreaths, etc.). The superiority of the 'brahma vidyā' over other rituals, and religious practices is emphasized here.

Hymn II.12 :

The speaker of the hymn is someone who is immersed in 'tapas' as is clear by the phrases, 'with heat while I am burning' (verse 1), 'our mind' (verse 2), 'burning heart' (verse 3), etc. This 'tapas' is 'homologized' with that of the Universe (Rudra) in verse 1. The figure eighty-three of verse 4 is perhaps arrived at by adding the two numerals 33 and 50, the former representing the usual 33 devas (here Āgirases standing very appropriately for Rudras, along with the Ādityas and Vasus) and the 50 alphabets of the Sanskrit language (the number of which is not fixed), and which

are here referred to as 'Sāman singers'. Verses 7 and 8 appear as malediction, though they perhaps are no more than a mere recital of what would happen to the 'non-believers' referred to in verse 6. The 'seven-fold vital breaths' and 'the eight marrows' have a special significance derived from yoga and tantrism. The former connects with *prāṇa*, *apāna*, etc., being the vivifying elements, and the latter with the eight *angas* of the human body.

Hymn II.13 :

This hymn, spoken by the guru throughout, is made up of two parts, the first three addressed to Agni who is the patron deity of the *tapas*, and the last two addressed to the initiate. The initiate is said to be covered by two garments. The first refers to the skin covering the naked body (verse 2) symbolically identified as the one given by *Bṛhaspati* (elsewhere *Varuṇa*) to *Soma*. The second is the cloth worn as a cloak by the initiate when he appears for the first time before the guru. (This is said to have been given by Agni for bodily welfare, and is, therefore, to be taken as white in colour, vide verses 7 and 5) after which the student stands naked.

Hymn II.14 :

In this hymn, all evil and hostile forces are driven off by the guru. From verse 6, in which the guru claims that he has 'gone round the homes' of the evil forces and in 'all the races conquered them', it is clear that these are merely sub-conscious elements (psychological conditions), and not objective external powers of evil or demons or devils.

Hymn II.15 :

This confirms that the evil forces of the preceding verse are psychological states only. The refrain addressed to the 'spirit' re-inforces this view.

Hymns II.16, 17 and 18 :

These three hymns are addressed to the sacred cord which is the mighty protector, armed with the *brahma-vidyā* power. The reference to '*prāṇa*' and '*apāna*' in verse 16.1 is very significant as implying yoga elements as part of the '*brahma-vidyā*'.

Hymns II.19, 20, 21, 22 and 23 :

In these five hymns, five deities namely, Agni, Vāyu, the sun, the moon, and the Waters (Energy) are successively addressed to destroy enemies (dveṣti) of the tapasvins, the enemies here being mortal and ritual opponents, and not psychological elements. These hymns constitute, therefore, maledictions.

Hymns II.24 and 25 :

Here again, are hymns directed against evil powers and forces, some of which may be external and the others subjective psychological states. In hymn 25, a devi, 'pr̥ṣnipārṇi' is invoked ; the name seems to signify that it is 'bhūmi' or earth, viewed as a Śakti, and worshipped by women clad in leaves only, as is the custom in many rituals of this sort in what is usually termed 'primitive religions' (cf. 'Śākambharī' of later times.).

Hymn II.26 :

The underlying symbolism of this hymn may be seen as signifying the collection of students, brahmacārins, who have come to the guru for imbibing the brahma-vidyā, constituting their 're-birth' after initiation.

Hymn II.27 :

Verse 6 of this hymn clearly identifies Rudra with the Plant referred to in various passages of the AV. He is also here referred to as 'kalāṣa bheṣaja', (healing by means of water) and 'nilāśikhanda' (possessing blue crests), terms of great significance. (The first appellation is quite in consonance with the fact that the Siva Linga in temple is either kept always in a pool of flowing water or water is continuously showered over it through a pot, with a hole at the bottom, kept above it. (cf. also Atri in the Rgveda) The significance of the second appellation will be explained by me elsewhere.). He appears (verse 2) as Vāyu, whom the eagles meet in their flight, and also as roots of plants, which the boar uproots. He is the lord of speech, and so also of brahma-vidyā. It is this which confers on him the power by means of which enemies are sought to be overcome in all the verses of this hymn.

Hymns II.28 and 29 :

These two hymns seek the blessings of various divinities, namely Agni (jātaavedas), Brhaspati, Varuna, etc., for the initiate's long

life, splendour (varcas) and so on. The victories that are desired to be won by him (verse 29.3) are 'bodily' and 'spiritual' (not territorial) victories. Verse 29.6 is a most important one. In the first hemistich, brahma-vidyā is compared, inferentially, with amṛt. The second hemistich implies that the initiate is naked ('dressed in robes like these two, namely heaven and earth'). Still more importantly Aśvins, the 'Lords of Time', are said to create an illusion (māya). The beginnings of the avidyā or illusion theory of the later philosophical thought may be seen here, the creator of the illusion here being time.

Hymn II.30 :

This hymn is an allegory, in which the union of Rudra (Plant, verse 4) with the soul of the initiate is dealt with, as if it is a marriage of the two. In verse 1, Rudra stirs up the mind of the initiate; in verse 2, Time, in the form of Aśvins, unites the mortal with the immortal; in verse 3, the descent of Rudra from the abode of the devas in the fourth region, to the initiate's brain which is homologized to the abode of the devas is symbolically expressed as the 'eagles' cry in flight', and the union as the junction of 'the shaft and the arrow's neck' verse 4 refers to the initiate's soul (or spirit) as being 'inward', and Rudra as being outward; and the two are treated as man and woman meeting each other as spouses.

Hymns II.31, 32 and 33 :

These three verses have this in common, that they purport, in the form of allegories, to bring under control powers standing as obstacles to the attainment of brahma-vidyā. In the first two hymns (namely hymns 31 and 32), the obstruction is caused by krimis, (ordinarily translated as worms), and in the third (namely hymn 33), it is yakṣma (ordinarily translated as consumption). Both krimi and yakṣma are said in these hymns to reside, or be present, in all parts of the body. The predicate forms, namely, 'crush', 'bruise', 'slay', 'break in pieces', 'cleave', 'rend', 'eradicate', 'root out', etc., all imply that these obstacles are being brought under control, from which we may infer that these verses in reality signify the control exercised over bodily function in yogic (tantric) exercises, such as 'āsanas' and 'yamās'. (The correct meaning of 'krimi' and 'yakṣma' will be explained elsewhere.).

Hymns II.37 and 35 :

These two hymns seek freedom (verse 34.3) and immortality (verse 34.5) for the worshippers (yajamān) (verse 34.2), who are in deep meditation (manas) (verse 34.3), by the devas 'loosing the seed of future-time existence' (verse 34.2). Hymn 35 seeks for givenness for shortcomings in worship so that the freedom sought for may not be withheld on that account.

Hymn II.36 :

This is also an allegory in the style of Hymn II.30 (discussed above), in which the union of the microcosm and macrocosm is symbolised as a marriage ceremony.

*3. Book III (analysis) :**Hymns III.1 and 2 :*

Read plainly, the hymn suggests the existence of real enemies whose destruction is sought, but esoterically it refers to evil psycho-mental states; the devas, namely Agni, Maruts, Indra, and Vāta stand for powers of inner control, Agni being the mind, Maruts and Vāta being breath, and Indra, physical exertion.

Hymn III.2 further stresses the esoteric meaning by such statements as : 'May Agni bewilder our opponents' senses', (verses 1 and 2). 'Vāta's furious rush' (verse 4), 'dazing their senses, Indra, come forward with wish and will' (verse 3), '.....O Maruts,strike with unwelcome darkness', etc. (verse 6), etc.

Hymns III.3 and 4 :

This hymn follows the same line of thought as the preceding one. Superficially, the verses seem to refer to the bringing from far off of a prince for coronation, but it could well mean the acceptance of an initiate into the folds of brahmacārya.

Hymns III.5 and 6 :

The term, 'parṇa-maṇi', of hymn III.5 has been translated by scholars as 'amulet of parṇa leaf', which it literally may be. But here it seems to be a sort of holy garland of leaves worn round the neck (verse 5), just like the rudrākṣa mālā. In that case, the hymn refers to an initiation ceremony rather than to a royal coronation.

Hymn 6 is identical in purport with hymn 5, except that in place of 'parṇa (perhaps palāśa) leaf, the Aśvattha is substituted.

Hymn III. 7 :

The 'hariṇa' of verse 1 refers to the rhinoceros whose horn (the singular visāṇa is used in this hymn, not the dual) is supposed to have magical (tantric) properties and is used in the initiation ceremonies of brahmacāris and Hindu ascetics. In this hymn, the symbolism is carried further to the extent of making it stand for Rudra himself who has come in search of the initiate (verse 2, the gazelle has 'bounded in pursuit of thee'). The horn—and Rudra is also meant by verse 5. 'It can cure the body's illness' (meaning it can help in attaining brahma-vidyā), and thereby lead to freedom (verses 4 and 7).

Hymn III.8 :

This hymn continues the prayer of the preceding one. From verse 6, it is clear that it is uttered by the guru, who calls upon the initiates to follow him in 'spirit, thoughts and wishes', they having become his 'subjects'.

Hymn III.9 :

This takes up the subject matter of hymn III.7. and carries it further forward.

Hymn III.10 :

This hymn must be read at different levels. At the first or most obvious level, it refers to the worship or ritual (sacrificial) conducted on the night of the eighth day after full moon at the beginning of the New Year (... parivatsarinam ... ekāṣṭakā). However, verse 1 in referring to yama points to a deeper level and verse 12, by referring to 'zealous fervour, which brought forth her babe the great and glorious Indra, (tapasā tapamāṇā jajāna garbham mahimānam indram) makes it clear that the worship is 'tapas' and the result, at one level, is the second birth of brahma-cārihood, but at the deeper level, it is immortality attained through tantric tapas. In that case 'yama' of verse 1 would refer to the breath control and other yamas of yoga.

Hymn III.11 :

This hymn makes it clear beyond doubt that all along the worship or ritual that has been referred to in the preceding hymns is yoga or tantrism, vide verses 5 and 6, which say that prāṇa and apāṇa have come and are asked to stay (that is, be controlled), so that the initiate may attain long life (verses 6, 7 and 8). (It is important to note that in verse 5, prāṇa and apāṇa are referred to as 'two car-oxen coming to their stall' (vraja stall). Verses 1 and 2 make many concepts of the AV clear. The initiate passes from one 'death' to another, when he becomes a brahmācārya, that is he becomes 'yama's student' as AV says in many places elsewhere also. In this respect, verse 1 is particularly important. For it says : 'For life I set thee free by this oblation both from unmarked decline and from consumption'. 'Unmarked decline' is not a very good translation of 'rajayakṣam' (The original reads : 'muncāmi tvā havisā jivanāya kamajata yakṣmāt uta rājayakṣmāt'). 'Yakṣma' here can only mean 'condition preceding initiation', or in other words 'avidyā', which is a sort of death).

Hymn III.12 :

This is without any shred of doubt an allegory in which the body is looked upon as a 'house', and the people who enter it to dwell therein (verse 1) are the elements of brahma-vidyā, who are led in (verse 4) by Brhaspati, Savitar, Vāyu, the Maruts, Bhaga and Agni (verse 9). The Queen of the House (verse 5) is the soul, or spirit, who welcomes Agni with Amṛt, etc. (verse 8), and the Water that kills yakṣma (that is avidyā inferentially) (verse 9.).

Hymns III.13 and 14 :

This hymn explains the significance and power of the Waters. They were first released when Ahi, the serpent, that is Vṛtra, was killed (verse 1). This means that in the Waters reside the primeval energy (see my Rg Vedic Studies), whose powers remained only in the potential state at the beginning. By flowing into the human being's heart (verse 7) they provide it with that spiritual exaltation which is like Amṛt (verse 6) and so on.

Hymn 14 continues this line of thought, with this modification that the Waters are now spoken of as 'Cows'.

Hymn III.15 :

The prayer to Agni in this hymn adopts the language and idioms of the mercantile community.

Hymn III.16 :

Bhaga is the principal deity of prayer here, he being an Aditya, and the auspicious form of Savitar. He discovers 'treasures'; (here he gives brahma-vidyā), and the 'pure place' of verse 6 is the spirit of the brahmacāry.

Hymn III.17 :

The basic materials of this hymn are borrowed from various verses of the Rg Veda, but in its own inimitable style the Atharva Veda turns the borrowed material into allegorical expressions signifying various aspects of the brahma-vidyā. The ploughland is the unshaped mind, Sita is the mind that has been prepared to receive the Vidyā, the plough (suna) and the ploughshare (sira) are the instruments through which the seed (of knowledge) is sowed by Virāj, the primeval spirit of energy, that is Rudra's Śakti.

Hymn III.18 :

The Plant, that is Rudra, makes its re-appearance here. Its aid is sought by the soul (spirit) of the initiate to overcome its 'rival' (sapatnah) which symbolises the 'temptations of the flesh' (verses 2 to 4).

Hymn III.19 :

Under the guise of a 'purohit' encouraging the king to gain victory in his wars, the hymn allegorises the functions of the guru in aiding his brahmacary pupils in their studies. Verses 7 and 8 are interesting and important. Prayers are compared to Arrows, which are made sharp by brahman (that is brahma-vidyā).

Hymn III.20 :

This is an invocation hymn and various divinities are appealed to in the usual manner. Verse 10 compares 'speech' (Vāk or vācas) to cows.

Hymn III.21 :

This hymn lists the various kinds and abodes of Fire (Agni) which are as follows: (1) Water, (2) Vṛtra, (3) man, (4)

Stones, (5) In herbs, trees and bushes, (6) In soma, (7) In cattle, (8) In birds, (9) In sylvan creatures, (10) In quadrupeds, (11) In bipeds, (12) which ride by the side of Indra, (13) Vaiśvānara, who is invoked in battle, (14) Kāma, the all-devouring deva, the Giver and the Receiver, (15) the invincible, pervading and wise Agni (16) strength-giver, glorious, etc., (17) the Hotr, (18) the Agni who bears Soma on his back, (19) lightning, etc., (20) in wind and in the sky, (21) Flesh-eating and (22) the Fire that is in the mountains.

Hymn III.22 :

This is an unconcealed prayer for strength and power, and the elephant is taken as the symbol and the embodiment of supreme power.

Hymn III.23 :

This is, on the face of it, a simple and straight-forward hymn for the conception of a male child. Yet, I cannot help feeling that it refers to the 'second-birth' (dvi-jā) of a brahmacārin under the guidance of his guru. (It must be remembered that in Yoga and tantrism, the guru is said to carry the student in 'his womb' during the period of his apprenticeship).

Hymn III.24 :

This is a hymn addressed to a Power, who is very benignant to mankind. It is verse 6 which reveals that he is a Gandharva of a mysterious kind. The verse says that he holds three 'sheaves' (mātrā) whereas the 'lady of the house' (that is the individual soul or spirit, vide hymn III.12) has 'four' (catasrah). If, however, we read this as 'fourth' instead of 'four', we find a clue to the esoteric meaning. It connects us with the concept of 'man knowing only the fourth, three being hidden in secret', which has been interpreted elsewhere as referring to man's knowledge being limited to earthly things only, whereas those of the other three divisions of the universe, namely the atmosphere, the sky and the heaven are beyond his ken. In that case, the Gandharva here would be Viśvāvasu or Rudra, who possesses the knowledge of the other three also.

Hymn III.25 :

Though appearing to be a love spell, this hymn nevertheless must be deemed to be an allegory about the control exercised by

the mind (or soul) over the body through brahma-vidyā. (Agni, of whom Kāma is a form, is, it must be remembered, the lord of the brahma-vidyā.).

Hymns III.26 and 27 :

In these hymns, six directions are indicated (namely, east, south, west, north, firm-set, and upmost) for which, in hymn 26, various forms of Agni are shown as ' protectors ', namely Weapons, Kāma, Waters, Vāta, Plants, and Brhaspati respectively. In another level of interpretation, the six regions are symbols of six parts (anga) of the human body.

A different way of expressing the same concept as in the preceding hymn, namely III.26, is adopted here in III.27. Each of the six regions are assigned a serpent said to be defending divinities of the respective regions or parts of the human body. The serpents are respectively asita (black), tiraśchiraji, (with transverse steaks), prdāku (adder or viper), svaja (another variety of viper), kalmaṣagrīva spotty-neck), etc., with the Arrows from them being named Ādityas, Fathers, nourishment, lightning, Plants and Rain respectively. (We must separately examine the symbol of serpent as used here).

These two hymns lay the base of the symbolic expressions for the Atharva Vedic anatomy and physiology, which have no correspondence in the modern scientific disciplines of those branches.

Hymn III.28 :

This is a hymn dealing with metaphysics. The Cow of verse 1 which has brought fourth twins is the Monistic Absolute (Jyoti, Vāk, brahman, etc.) out of which springs the manifest world at first in the form of duality and then a plurality. This world of duality is a world in which pain and sorrow are all-prevalent. (This is the import of the remaining five verses of this hymn.).

Hymn III.29 :

This hymn has to be read at various levels. At the surface level, it means no more than that the slaughtered ram with white feet and five cakes must be made as offerings to Yama when a man dies. This frees him from all guilt which might otherwise bring him under Yama's displeasure. According to this view, verse

7 makes Kāma, Desire, the creator, the nourisher and destroyer of life. At a deeper level, the hymn is found to be full of mysticism. The white-footed ram (Śitipāt) is the soul, and the five cakes (āpupam) are the five breaths; if they are 'sacrificed', that is to say, if they are utilised in tapas (tantric yoga) the power of Yama over the individual is removed and he attains immortality. This is brahma-vidyā.

Hymn III.30 :

The tapasvins are hereby advised to lead a calm and peaceful communal life amongst themselves living in amity and union.

Hymn III.31 :

This is samādhi, the ultimate objective of yoga and tantrism and it is indicated in verse 11 as immortality. In this state, all guilt and sin (bodily corruption of the soul) vanish, (verses 1 and 2) all desire and evil thoughts are no more, (verse 3), the individual has merged into the universe, (verse 4), the soul has united with the ultimate (verse 5), the vital airs have gone to Agni, and breath to the moon, (verse 6), the mighty breath has gone to the sun (verse 7), and life flourishes like the sap of the plants (verse 1), this life being not the ordinary one, but immortal life (verse 11).

4. Book IV.

Hymn IV.1 :

This is a 'Creation' hymn which sees the origin of the universe in Desire (Vena) (verse 1), which attracted the Father (Prajāpati or Tvastṛ) to have (incestuous) relation with his daughter (Aditi or Vāk), (verse 2). From this union came Agni (verse 2), the all-knowing, (compare jātaavedas) (verse 3), and he then set about establishing the heaven, earth, sky, atmosphere (verse 4). Then came the sage Brhaspati (verse 6) and Atharvan, the father of mortals (verse 7), and from them came all the multifarious forms (verse 5) which were till then in deep slumber (verse 6).

Hymn IV.2 :

This hymn takes off from where the previous one has ended, and sets out to define the deva who must be worshipped as the all-powerful one. It finds him in the Hiranyagarbha, the golden-egg

which is Agni (verse 8), who is floating in the Waters. (In the Rg Veda, the corresponding 'unknown' deva is Prajāpati, and this constitutes one of the basic elements differentiating the spirit of the Rg and Atharva Vedas.).

Hymn IV.3 :

That this hymn refers to evil elements, namely tiger, wolf, thief, snake, etc., is obvious, but what they represent requires careful consideration. They stand for evil passions, greed, lust, anger, etc., and the intention clearly is to purify the mind by driving them away. (In this connection, it will be useful to compare this hymn with hymn IV.9, where these evil passions are clearly expressed in specific terms, vide verse 6 in particular.). Indra's and Soma's child in verse 7 seems to refer to brahma-vidyā, which involves bodily, mental and spiritual disciplines and knowledge. The first line of this verse is very enigmatic and reads as : 'Open not what thou hast compressed, close not what thou has not compressed', (yat samyamo na viyamo vi yamo yanna samyamah). It refers perhaps to the three stages of breathing, namely, inhaling, holding and exhaling the breath. The terms 'yama' and 'samyama' which are used twice each in this brief passage seem to refer to the 'yamas' or 'angas' of Yoga, where are prescribed 5 breath control techniques (yamas) (namely, 'yama', 'niyama', 'prāṇa-yāma', 'āsana' and 'pratyahara') and one 'samyama' (made up of three items, namely dhāraṇa, dhyāna and samādhi). Or perhaps even more esoterically it refers to the entry of kundalini in the region of bliss, and the various mechanisms involved therein.

Hymn IV.4 :

The 'Plant' of this hymn has been shown in the comments in earlier verses as standing for Rudra.

Hymn IV.5 :

'The Bull who hath a thousand horns, etc.' of verse 1 stands for the sun as scholars have pointed out. Here, however, by transference of ideas, it stands for the brahma-vidyā whose patron saints are, as it were, Agni and the Sun, and this Vidyā is taught, learnt and practised in secrecy, which is symbolised here by the sleep to which everyone, except the practitioner, is consigned.

Hymn IV.6 :

The spirit of this hymn is one which, on the face of it, appears antithetical to the rest of this Veda. In sum, it says that the malefic acts (poison) of Rudra (the Plant) and his Arrow have been neutralised by the brahman (power of the brahma-vidyā) of the brahmācārīn. To make sense out of it, we must deem mortal life which is also the gift of Rudra, as a sort of poison, which is eradicated through the yoga of the vidyā, leading to immortality. A slightly more complicated interpretation would hold that by adopting such a hostile stand towards Rudra, the brahmācārīn is, in fact, showing his reverence to that deity, a technique which is common in this type of ritual, namely Yoga and Tantrism, and even in bhakti concepts in general.

Hymn IV.7 :

This hymn is also in the same spirit as the preceding one. By adopting a defiant posture, the supplicant is in fact demonstrating his subordination to the Plant (Rudra) (verse 6). The symbols such as poison, etc. are the same as those of the preceding hymn. The human body is said to have six quarters.

Hymn IV.8 :

The tiger of this hymn is the initiate (verses 4 and 7) and the 'lion' (verse 7) is the Being (verse 1), the sovran Lord of Creatures (bhūtānām adhipati), that is Rudra. Though appearing to be concerned with royal consecration, the subject matter of the hymn is, in reality, the initiation of a brahmācārīn, both the rituals being deemed to be of the same nature. In verse 3, for example, the self-resplendent One (brahman, who is Rudra by implication) is said to be a royal hero etc.

Hymn IV.9 :

In this hymn, a number of words and concepts are used in symbolic sense. The term 'anjana' (verse 3, 4, etc.) meaning 'a medicinal ointment for the eye' stands for Rudra who in verse 1 is the living being that saves us, and is the mountain's eye. He knows the Amṛt (verse 3) ; he is called upon to protect the supplicant from 'lying speech, from evil dream, from wicked act and sinfulness, from hostile and malignant eye' (verse 6). In hymn 6 above, these are symbolised as 'man, tiger, wolf, and serpent.' Verse

8 is also important. It says that Rudra (that is the *anjanā*) controls three evils (*dāśas*), namely *takman*, *balāsa* and *ahi*. These are translated by scholars as fever, consumption and serpent respectively, but these are merely symbols standing probably for desire, death and ignorance respectively. It is interesting, to read in verses 8, 9 and 10 that this ointment comes from the 'three-peaked' hill which quite obviously refers to Rudra who is endowed with three eyes, the term 'eye' appearing twice specifically in the hymn, which quite obviously refers to Rudra who is endowed with three eyes, the term 'eye' appearing twice specifically in the hymn, and by implication (*anjanā* being a remedy applied to the eye) throughout. Rudra is often called *sānu*, peak)

Hymn IV.10 :

In this hymn, a pearl stands as symbol of Rudra, born out of the wind (*vāta*) in the firmament (*antarikṣa*), from the lightning (*vidyut*), and from the primeval light (*jyoti*) (verse 1). It wards off *Rākṣasas*, and fiends (verse 2), is all-healing and preserves from distress (*ainhas*) (verse 3); lengthens life (verse 3), protects against death (shafts of *devas* and *asuras*) (verse 5) and is the bone of *devas* (verse 7). It was born from Soma (verse 6). (In tantrism, the pearl in shell stands for the whole universe as a symbol. The shell is the *yonī*, and the pearl the *linga*. Siva is, therefore, within the oyster shell, submerged in *Śakti*).

Hymn IV.11 :

The subject matter of this hymn is the 'Bull' (*anadvān*), who supports (*dhara*) the universe (verse 1). In verse 2, he is identified with Indra who has laid down three pathways of time, (namely the past, the present and the future) (verse 2). It is very important to be very clear about the significance of the symbolisms involved here. The support (*dhārṇa*) of the universe (the Bull) is really Rudra, who in his corporeal form, which is subject to the power of time, appears as Indra. It is in this form that he, Rudra, performs his *tapas* (verse 3), and imparts his knowledge, which is *brahma-vidyā* (verse 3). He is neither the 'sacrifice (*yajna*), nor sacrificer, he is neither the giver nor the receiver, and yet he governs and rules' (verse 5). He is served by mankind through *tapas* which leads to immortality (verse 6). He, as the Ox, holds *Prajāpati*, Indra, Agni, etc. in the various parts of his body and

also in form and spirit (verse 7), and he is spread over the whole universe (verse 8). 'The seven exhaustless pourings of the Ox' of verse 9 refer to the seven breaths (r̥ṣis), or means (angas) of yoga, namely yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇa and dhyāna, the knowledge of which leads to immortality (which is samādhi) (verse 10). These exercises are to be performed in the morning, noon and evening (the sandhya hours) (verse 12).

Hymn IV.12 :

Here, Rudra (the Plant) becomes Arundhati (Plant or Star of that name). The whole hymn deals with the healing power of Rudra. Though bodily ailments and defects are referred to, they must be deemed to be symbols of inner (psychological or rather psychomental) shortcomings.

Hymn IV.13 :

The only difference in tenor between this and the immediately preceding hymns is the change in the symbol of Rudra-Śiva. Here, he is said to be the 'Wind (Vāta) blowing healing balm', etc. (verse 3). There is nothing unique in this, since Vāta and Rudra are identified in various passages in the Atharva and Rg Vedas.

Hymn IV.14 :

'The goat (aja) was produced (ajāniṣṭa) from Agni', says verse 1 of this hymn. Agni is unborn, 'aja', which provides the base for a play upon the word. Birth, and life, are full of pain and sorrow (says verse 1), for the soul is also 'aja', that is without birth, and is deemed to be a part of Agni. Thus, 'aja' has three meanings here, namely goat, Agni and human soul. So, when aja, the goat, goes to heaven, he accompanies the soul after death (verse 2). The plan according to which the body of the sacrificed goat is to be laid out (verses 8 to 9), is the same as prescribed for the placing of the body of a dead person.

Hymn IV.15 :

This is an allegory. Though appearing as a hymn for causing rainfall, it actually symbolises the approaching climax of samādhi (in tapas), when the accompanying supreme bliss appears like rain falling upon the parched earth. (In tantrism, soma pours into the mouth when samādhi is reached).

Hymn IV.16 :

Here, Varuṇa appears as the lord of the uninitiated human being, who through ignorance, that is avidyā (absence of brahma-vidyā), identifies himself with his body. This is referred to as Varuṇa's noose, for the body is said to have been formed by Varuṇa to accommodate the soul which is Agni. (It has, however, to be noted that once the body has been formed by Varuṇa, it begins to aspire for the powers of Indra, and is, therefore, seen as Indra, being full of indriyas, or sensory material.). Verse 8 is interesting. It speaks of two aspects of Varuṇa.

Hymn IV.17 :

The Plant which represents, and in fact, is Rudra, is here the Apāmārga (literally meaning the path of the Waters.). Verses 3 to 7 list the type of evils, physical and psychomental that befall a man, and they include all the sorrows, not excepting evil dreams, and their causes, namely greed, lust, etc. Verse 8 makes it clear that brahma-vidyā provided by Rudra is the remedy for all this.

Hymns IV.18 and 19 :

Here, the aid of the Plant (Rudra) is sought to nullify spells and other evils emerging from hostile forces and enemies (psychomental states).

Hymns IV.20 to 33 :

I propose to deal with the next 14 hymns of this book (hymns 20 to 33 of Bk. IV) even more summarily, since they are somewhat long-winded, and rather repetitive. Their purport is not very different from that of the preceding hymns, being invocations to the Plant, (Rudra), Agni and Indra for the same kind of blessings and protection as in those hymns. I shall only point out such special features as are noticeable in these remaining hymns.

Verse 20.2 mentions six regions of the Universe, and in verse 20.4, Śūdras and Āryans are differentiated. The brahmacāryas are looked upon in hymn 21 as cattle returning home. The king is an Indra in miniature, in hymn 22. Agni, in hymn 23, is invoked as the lord of all creatures in the universe, 'that was and that will be', (jātam jātavyam), and as the divinity (tapas) who gave power (balam) to the ṛṣis (verse 5), and immortality to the devas (verse 6), Agni being the lord of tapas. Indra, the symbol of body and

corporeal power, is invoked in hymn 24. Vāyu and Savitar are also looked upon in hymn 25 as deliverers from the various evils tormenting man, for which purpose they are deemed to have taken up residence in the abode of the devas, which symbolically means the mind (brain) of man. Earth and Heaven (in hymn 26), the Maruts (in hymn 27), Bhava and Śarva (in hymn 28), and Mitra and Varuṇa (in hymn 29) are all prayed to for the same purpose.

In the second verse, the initiate is seen as conducting exercises (like yoga), which bring elements from the lower and upper parts into contact with one another as in a sexual union. 'The upper and lower 'stones' merge in and crush each other', (Kuṇḍalinī Yoga).

Hymn 30, in which Vāk speaks about herself, is a reproduction of the Rg Vedic Hymn X.125; hymns 31 and 32 which report on manyu are reproductions of the Rg Vedic Hymns X.84 and X.85 respectively; similarly, hymn 33, which describes the powers of Agni is a reproduction of RV X.97.

From verses 34 onwards, the remaining 7 hymns (with the exception of one or two) develop special characteristics which call for a little more elaborate treatment.

Hymns IV. 34 and 35 :

These two hymns deal with 'odana' (literally rice dish mashed with milk). This is merely a symbol of something else, whose real nature has now to be investigated and determined. According to verse 34.8, this odana is a 'wishe-fulfilling Cow' spread out (viṣṭārī) between Heaven and Earth. Its head is brahmā, its back is bṛhat, its belly is vāmadevya, its face is truth (satyam), its two sides (pakṣaṇ) metres, and it is a wide-spread (viṣṭārī) tapas (verse 34.1). These symbols bear a close resemblance to the picture of Rudra-Śiva in tapas as depicted in yoga and tantric literature. There, Rudra in tapas is the form of the Universe; his brain (head) is the abode of brahmā and the devas, his back-bone is bṛhat, etc. The rest of the verses of these two hymns fill up the details of this imaginary odana. It is, therefore, a symbol first of Rudra, the world-spirit, and by extension of concept, the human spirit (soul and brahma-vidyā also.).

Hymn IV.36 :

Here again, Agni is invoked directly to destroy inimical forces, both physical and psycho-mental.

Hymns IV.37 and 38 :

Rudra-Śiva is, in these two hymns, under the usual designation of the Plant, invoked against his own followers (sexual and such forms of desire, as also other temptations of the flesh) appearing in the form of Gandharvas, and Apsarasas. In verse 38.6 and 7, the white cow and its calf are symbols of the soul (or spirit) of the guru and the initiate, whom the Plant (Rudra-Siva) is asked to protect.

Hymns §V.39 and 40 :

These two hymns are addressed to various divinities of whom Agni has the favoured place, because he is jātavedas, the Knower, the lord of knowledge, of brahma-vidyā. His mother, (Cow) is said to be the Earth. Similarly, the others, namely Vāyu, Sun, and Chandra, have each their own mother (Cow), which are Air, Heaven, and the Quarters (the Universe) respectively. (There are eight Quarters.). Verse 39.10 talks of the seven mouths of Jātavedas. Superficially, this will be seen as the seven tongues of fire, but esoterically, they are the seven yamas, or angas, of Yoga, which are the means through which Agni is served and through which he (as tapas, the fire) purifies the soul or spirit of man.

*5. Book V (analysis).**Hymn V.1 :*

This is not a creation hymn, but a hymn of invocation, addressed first to Agni, later to Indra and then to Varuṇa. Agni is the first form of the Universe, which has been set up and supported by him as a Pillar extending over all the three regions of the Universe, for which reason he is called Trita. (Verses 1, 2 and 6). Thanks to Agni, the sage who is the composer of this hymn goes fearlessly along the seven paths, one of which is the path terminating life. (Verse 6 and 7). Indra (Śakra) has provided the necessary corporeal strength (ūrja) (verse 8). But, it is Varuṇa who has created the forms (Vapu) (verses 8 and 9).

Hymn V.2 :

This is a hymn addressed to Indra, 'the Mighty One of splendid valour' (verse 1), and it is his vigour, strength and courage which are praised (various verses). Verse 9 makes the purpose of the hymn clear. Bṛhaddiva, the great Atharvan, (who is also obviously the first) had also acquired the powers of Indra ; it is not specifically said, but it is implied, that he acquired it through tapas.

Hymn V.3 :

Various deities are invoked, principally Indra and Agni.

Hymn V.4 :

The Plant which heals diseases and which is brought from distant snowy mountains is Rudra, as already explained earlier.

Hymn V.5 :

Silāchī, the plant, (otherwise called Arundhati—verse 9) is the symbolic name of Rudra, who as a medicine-man cures all diseases. This has been pointed out in the comments on earlier verses also. The Rudra connection is established here by verse 7 (thy soul is wind). Because the word is feminine in gender, the 'plant' is spoken of as female, and so said to be 'sister of the Waters' (verse 7) and 'sister of the gods' (verse 1) making it out that she is the Śakti (or power) of Rudra, (Dakṣa's, or Tvaṣṭr's daughter).

Hymn V.6 :

Vena, primeval Desire (or Kāma) is invoked in verse 1 ; Vena appears more prominently in hymn IV.1, whence this verse is borrowed. Verse 4 seems to imply that Soma (the fragile) was liberally offered to Indra in the thirteenth or intercalary month which was named Indra on that account (verses 11 to 14 also). Verse 2 which is a repetition of verse IV.7.7., is addressed to the Plant (Rudra) seeking protection. Verse 6 on the other hand seems to revert to Vena, Desire (Kāma), who is said to be responsible for getting human beings enmeshed in snares (bonds of the body which prevent the soul becoming free). Soma and Rudra are brought into the picture in verses 5 to 9. Together with Agni, they are prayed to for freedom from 'blame' (avadya) and for immortality, which also seems to be the request addressed to Indra

in verses 11 to 14. The reference to 'brahman' in verses 1, seems to indicate that these prayers are for brahma-vidyā which is in the possession of Indra, Agni, Soma and Rudra.

Hymn V.7 :

This is a prayer apparently intended to deprecate malign powers, who might otherwise stand in the way of acquiring 'brahman' (that is brahma-vidyā) which is sought from Soma through prayer (vāca and manoyuja) (verse 5). One of the forms in which obstruction of this sort could become operative is bad dreams ('coming as a naked girl that hauntest people in sleep' and 'baffling thought and firm intention of a man') (verse 8.).

Hymn V.8 :

Agni is besought to protect worship from hostile powers who also have gained some power (brahman) through worship (verse 6). (These are in the case of tapas psycho-mental evil powers.).

Hymn V.9 :

Heaven and Earth, Antarikṣa (atmosphere), Sūrya and Vāta are addressed in pairs for protection, vigour, etc. It is important to note that these powers are grouped together in pairs. Sūrya is said to be the eye, Vāta, the breath, antarikṣa, the soul, and earth, the body of the ātmā (soul or self) (verse 7). They are called upon to 'exalt life, strength, deed and action, and to increase understanding and vigour, to be powerful keepers, to watch and guard (the initiate), be mistress of life and creations, to dwell within him, and to forbear from harming him.' That such prayers are addressed to the soul, the body, the breath and the eye savour of yogic exercises.

Hymn V.10 :

This is a prayer for achieving concentration. Protection (verses 1 to 6) is sought from the deities of the seven regions (or of the seven parts of the body). Here, the individual body (microcosm) is homologized with the universe (macrocosm). The protection is sought from 'attack by sinners' which can only mean temptations and evil thoughts or distractions. In addition, the deities

Br̥hat (here, it must mean Rudra only), Mātarisvan, Sūrya, Antarikṣa Earth and Sarasvatī are referred to, and they are said to represent respectively the mind, the two breaths (prāṇa and apāṇa) the eye, the ear, the body and speech (mentally uttered). All this again savours of yogic and tantric practices. (There are eight powers, the eighth being 'br̥hat', and equally eight angas of the body, the eighth being mind or consciousness.).

Hymn V.11 :

The acquisition of brahma-vidyā (verses 10 and 11) by Atharvan, the earliest fire-priest, from Varuṇa is described here in the form of a dialogue between the two. Atharvan claims that possession of such knowledge frees him from Varuṇa's noose, which is the bond of the soul attached to body. It appears that this knowledge had been given by Varuṇa to others already, and Atharvan has to speak sharply to Varuṇa (verses 1 to 10) before the latter imparts it to him.

Hymn V.12 :

This is a hymn of praise and invocation to Agni.

Hymn V.13 :

This is on the face of it a black magic spell against snakes, though even then many words and phrases, such as Tabuva and Tastuva (verse 1) remain inexplicable. If, however, the view that the brahma-vidyā of the AV is yoga and tantrism is accepted, then a more rational interpretation becomes available. The 'snakes' would then become the poisonous matter circulating in the body, which are controlled and ejected (made sapless, arasa) by means of yoga.

Hymn V.14 :

The Plant (verse 1) is Rudra who is in Antarikṣa (atmosphere) as Vāta, where the eagle, (that is birds in general) fly; and as a plant the roots are buried in earth, wherefrom the boars dig them up. The rest of the hymn is devoted to seeking Rudra's (Plant's) aid in what appears on the face of it to be exorcism and counter-witchcraft. It is quite possible, however, that the reference is to the mantras of the brahma-vidyā and their power.

Hymns V.15 and 16 :

The figures 11, 22 and all multiples of 11 which are associated with the Plant (Rudra) in these two hymns, recall the fact that there are 11 Rudras in the Vedic pantheon of which the chief or principal One is Rudra himself.

Hymn V.17 :

In this hymn, some of the worst aspects of the caste-dominated society are described. Vedic authority is sought through these means for the exploitation of other members of the society by the brahmin community. I do not discuss the details which are not relevant to my main purpose, and in any case, the hymn presents no problem in exegesis. (The hymn echoes the contents of the RV hymn X.103.).

Hymns V.18 and 19 :

This is another attempt to find support in religion for the brahmins' special privileges in society. For the same reasons as mentioned against the previous hymn, I pass over these two also.

Hymns V.20 and 21 :

Appearing in the guise of extolling the war-drum and seeming to be nothing more than a magic charm to secure victory in battle, these two hymns are really allegories possessing an esoteric meaning. At a hidden level, the war-drum stands for the drum (damaru) (or dundubhi) (see also the term jyāghoṣā in verse 21.9), of Rudra, and at a deeper level still it is the symbol of the mantras of brahma-vidyā. Otherwise the hymn presents no difficulty in exegesis.

Hymn V.22 :

The real meaning of the term 'takman' remains so far undiscovered ; so it is not possible to say what its esoteric meaning, if any, may be. At a later date, I hope to present a solution to this problem. (Verses 6 and 7 are gratuitous insults to the Śūdra community.).

Hymn V.23 :

An esoteric meaning can be derived from the explanations offered elsewhere to the terms, vulture and wolf (verse 4).

Hymn V.24 :

The various Powers of the Universe are invoked.

Hymn V.25 :

This is treated by scholars as a 'charm to accompany the garbhadhāna ceremony to ensure or facilitate and bless conception' (Griffith). I have already explained earlier that an esoteric meaning for conception lies in the concept that the initiate brahmācārin lies within the guru's body as a babe in the womb.

Hymns V.26 and 27 :

These are probably the hymns muttered by the brahma priest when presiding over sacrificial rituals, referred to by the Rg Veda.

Hymn V.28 :

This hymn sets up a relationship (homology) between the sacred thread of the brahmins and various other entities. The thread is three-stringed (verse 11), and each string carries three strands (verse 1). Of the three strings, one is said to be golden, one silver and one iron, and the whole thing is produced through tapas (verse 1). Each metal represents one of the three regions, sky (golden), antarikṣa (silver) and earth (iron) (verses 9 and 10). (There is also a word play here. Guṇa means both thread and the three basic elements of character, satva, rajas and tamas.) Corresponding to the nine strands, there are nine divinities, Agni, Sun, Moon, Earth, Waters, Sky, Antarikṣa, the Quarters and the points between them, as also the nine seasons. (We are not told what these nine seasons are). The thread commands a triple power, etc. It is clear that the reference to metals is only symbolic, and all that is intended is to attribute to this thread power over the whole universe. Since the thread is conferred on the brahmācāri when he commences his studies, the power of the thread is to be considered as derived from brahma-vidyā. It confers the splendour of the sun, and long life on the wearer (verse 13).

Hymns V.29 and 30 :

This is addressed to Agni as jātavedas, for protection against hostile forces which are thought of as having eaten up the flesh of someone who apparently has been undergoing severe austerities. Agni is asked to restore him to full health.

6. *Book VI (analysis).*

Book VI has 142 short hymns. The symbolisms are no different from what has already been noticed in the previous five books. It would be tedious, therefore, to discuss each and every one of these 142 hymns. Accordingly, I shall limit the discussion to a detailed examination of only those that show any special and noteworthy feature.

Hymn VI.1 :

Verse 3 of this hymn refers to two paths which are to be traversed by human beings under the guidance of Savitar who sends many everlasting blessings. It appears to me that these two paths are two alternative modes of worship, namely the sacrificial rituals and tapas. On the other hand, it might refer to the Uttarāyana and Dakṣināyana of the Sun, death during which period determines the alternative destinations.

Hymn VI.19 :

This is a prayer to Pavamāna (Soma) and Savitar for self-purification. Verse 1 implies purification of mind through (good) thoughts (dhī); similarly, verse 2 asks for purity (of mind) 'for wisdom' and 'for power', and (of body) 'for life and unassailed security'; verse 6 is clear that purification is necessary in both these matters. ('pavitrena' and 'śavena').

Hymn VI.26 :

This hymn seeks freedom from evil (pāpman), which appears here as a sort of 'bad luck' or misfortune. It has physical characteristics and has no moral overtones.

Hymns VI.27, 28 and 29 :

In these, Yama, Death personified, comes down in the form of a dove. Similarly, the owl appears as a bird of ill-omen.

Hymn VI.32 :

In verse 2, 'Rudra, the herb of universal Power, has allied himself with Yama', that is to say Rudra is as much a deity of death as Yama.

Hymn VI.36 :

Agni, Vaiṣvānara is, in Verse 1, 'the Lord of Light and endless life.' Alternatively, he 'shapes himself to all things' that is to say, he is present (as a spirit or soul) in all things. He becomes Vāma in verse 3, and is the 'controller of all that is, and is to be', (bhūtasya bhavyṣyasya).

Hymn VI.38 :

Power and energy that is present in all things, (a variety of living and non-living things are mentioned including 'akṣa' which may be either axle, or dice), are personified as a devī (Śakti).

Hymn VI.41 :

This may be considered as a prayer, seeking a sort of yoga control, of mind and body. In verse 1, (gift of) 'mind, intellect, thought, purpose, intelligence, sense hearing, and sight' are sought, and in verse 2, prāṇa, apāna and vyāna from Sarasvatī; in verse 3, the ṛṣis (by which term, in the context, must be meant only the 'breaths') are referred to as 'protectors of bodies.'

Hymn VI.42 :

Here, the guru controls a rebellious initiate. In verse 2, there is a play upon the word 'guru', which might be taken either by itself (in which case, it will mean 'teacher'), or with 'aśman' (stone), in which case it might mean 'heavy stone', that is a great guru.

Hymn VI.43 :

Here also in hymn 41, the guru is found controlling the passions of his initiate. But, in this hymn, it is achieved with the aid of the darbha grass, which is also significantly referred to as a 'Plant' by which symbol, Rudra is meant. There is good justification, therefore, for holding that the control of passions is being exercised by yoga, Rudra being the lord of tapas and yoga.

Hymn VI.44 :

Verse 3 of this hymn has an odd cure for disease, caused by wind (!), namely Rudra's urine (rudrasya mūtram) ! Perhaps what is referred to here is yogic control of body and mind, as in

hymn 43 (previous), or the drinking of urine of the guru (Rudra), which is a tantric medicine.

Hymns VI.45 and 46 :

Both these hymns are concerned with purifying the mind, the latter hymn (46) referring to sub-conscious operations of the mind which manifest themselves in dreams.

Hymn VI.49 :

There is much esoterism in this hymn. In verse 1, 'kapi' (literally ape) is a code for 'kapila' 'the yellow clad' (yogi, Śiva). Even though 'the arrow has penetrated the body, there is no wound to be seen', that is to say, the body does not suffer by ascetic practices. The reference to 'the cow eating her after-birth' is significant, and has double meaning. On the one hand, the body is seen as born out of the placenta, of which the last vestige is the arrow, and on the other hand, it is the arrow which has infused into the body the brahma-vidyā which has led to the 'second birth', and after doing so, the arrow is left behind as 'the after-birth' like the placenta.

Verse 6 mentions eagles, 'sending forth their voice aloud in heaven and dancing about in the sky, etc.'. Then, they descend to repair the lower 'stone' which leads to the 'dwellers in the Sun' gaining 'abundant seed'. The eagles are, it is clear, 'breath.'

The whole exercise is the extreme form of yogic (tantric) breath control and other exercises in which the kundalinī, the lower 'stone', rises to meet and mix with the upper 'stone', the controlled breath and other elements in 'the sky's dark vault' which is in the head, (the mouth and the cranium).

Hymn VI.50 :

This is an allegory for the yogic (tantric) exercises of control over flow of semen. The 'rat' of verse 1 refers to the penis, the 'grain' to semen and the rest of the verse to 'controls'. Verse 2 is to prevent the out-flow and the conservation of the semen. In verse 3, 'vaghāpati', the fierce animal and symbol of strength of the female (referring to the female's attempt to hasten the out-flow and absorption of semen into herself), is addressed to withhold such attempts.

Hymn VI.56 :

Verse 1 of this hymn is almost identical with IV.3.7, my comments on which may be seen in the relevant section of Chapter IX ante. It confirms the view that it refers to the breathing process, and consequently, the serpent here is a symbol of the nāḍis, which in AV physiology are the passages through which breath passes through the human system.

Hymn Vṣ.57 :

This is an allegory. The 'cure' for hot fever is cold water, (that is to say, tapas is controlled by āpah). That is why Rudra (as linga) is eternally submerged in water in Hindu iconography.

Hymn Vṣ.62 :

Fire (Agni), air (breath, vāta), and the waters are said to purify (verse 1). Sūnṛta, 'whose forms and regions have fair smooth backs' is said to endow riches (verses 2) which include long life (verse 3). These are concepts associated with yoga or tapas.

Hymn VI.65 :

The 'manyu,' which forms the subject of this hymn is translated by some scholars as 'anger', but it is more appropriately rendered as 'passion', with the adjectival form of 'passionate'. Here, it refers to the brahma-vidyā which yields the 'brahman' power. This is clear from the terms 'mano-yuja', 'parasara', etc. (verse 1), and 'nairhastam' (handless) (verse 2). Also in verse 3, the statement, 'Indra made the shaft handless foes first for Asuras', connects manyu with speech, or voice, or the mantras of brahma-vidyā.

Hymn VI.66 :

On the other hand, (compare the previous hymn), 'handless' here means 'powerless'.

Hymn VI.68 :

This is the sacrament (saṃskāra) of head-shaving.

Hymn VI.71 :

The food referred to in this hymn is quite obviously food received as bhikṣa by the brahmacārin (Especially verse 2).

Hymn VI.72 :

Behind the apparent prayer (spell) for sexual power (virility) seems to lie indications of the secret sexual exercises of tantrism.

Hymns VI.73 and 74 :

The prayer for concord and unity contained in these two hymns is for strengthening the bonds of membership of some sect, presumably tantric, where disunity is always rampant.

Hymn VI.80 :

There is a reference here to the dog-star, Sirius (Heavenly Hound), called also Canis Major. The three 'kālākānjas' are probably the three stars on Orion's belt (cf. note by Whitney on this verse.).

Hymns VI.88, 86 and 87 :

Royal consecration (abhiṣekha) ceremony, or brahmacārin's initiation ceremony, is referred to here.

Hymn VI.90 :

Rudra appears in his malefic form here. Perhaps the arrow is the arrow of Kāma (Desire) which, spreading through the body causes burning fever (like lust).

Hymn Vṣ.91 :

The phrase 'with a team of eight, team of six' (aṣṭayoga, ṣaḍyogā) has an esoteric meaning; the six and eight yogas are the corresponding 'angas' of yogayāmas, which would imply the body coupled with the soul or spirit. (The 'yava' of verse 1 may be compared with the manojava of verse 1 of the next hymn, namely, hymn number 92.).

Hymn VI.92 :

The esoteric meaning of this hymn lies in the comparison (implied) of the mind with horse. Indra is said elsewhere (in the RV) to possess 'mind-yoked horses', which has much relevance here. The hymn tells of the freedom attained by the mind in tapas, or tantrism.

Hymn Vṣ.100 :

Speech (and by metonymy, the mantra, of brahma-vidyā) is meant here.

Hymns VI.103 and 104 :

These two hymns symbolise 'breath control' at esoteric level. In verse 2, it is not made clear, and that deliberately, what the first, the last and the midmost are, but it is a fair speculation that they are 'pūraka' (inhalation) 'recaka', (exhalation), and 'kumbhaka' (retention of inhaled air) of yoga techniques. The other words, such as 'sandānam', 'ādānam', etc. fit neatly into this concept. The word 'tapas' which occurs in verse 104.2 confirms this.

Hymn VI.106 :

This is the description of a house and its location in the midst of a lake with lotuses, etc. However, it can be seen as a mandala of tantra, which is also described in these same terms. Looked at in another way, it may also be taken as symbolising the human body (śālā = house = body, verse 2), the āyane and prāyāne are to be taken as corresponding to prāṇa and vyāna breaths, respectively the hrada (pond) corresponding to hṛda (heart) and puṇḍarikam (Lotus) in the pond being analogous to the cakṛa of the heart. (All these words are in verse 1).

Hymn VI.108 :

Here, intelligence (medhas) (wisdom, knowledge, etc.) is praised, which can without difficulty be identified as brahma-vidyā.

Hymn VI.111 :

The madness and bondage which this hymn speaks of are symbols of ignorance (avidyā) and the bondage cast on the soul by the body.

Hymns VI.114 to 121 :

The Atharvan priests are the supervisors, under the designation of brahmā, over the sacrificial rituals; their main function is to ensure that no errors occur in the ritual, and if errors do occur, they had to take proper remedial measures. These hymns reflect this rule in various forms, and describe the various types of shortcomings the brahmā might knowingly or otherwise commit.

Hymn VI.122 :

This seems to be an accompaniment to the offerings to manes (verse 1 refers to the succession line as a thread'). What is of

special interest is verse 2, which talks of 'yajna' being performed 'in mind' (manas) in tapas. In verse 3 is to be found a reference to the practice of daughters being offered to the brahmins who conduct the rituals.

Hymn VI.124 :

The practice of eating only things that fall from above is practised by some tantric sects.

Hymn VI.133 :

This hymn describes the sacred thread of the brahmacāri (the yajnopaviṣṭa of brahmins). From verse 1, it appears that it was earlier bound round the waist (mekhala). It is a weapon of the ṛṣis and makes the wearer fearless (verse 2).

The sacred cord makes the brahmacāri to become an offering to Yama (Death's student) (that is, he is re-born), and has, therefore, to take to tapas, and seek knowledge (brahman) (verse 3). The girdle is the daughter of 'faith' (śraddhā), and of tapas, sister of the 'being-making seers' (ṛṣinām bhūtakṛtām); it engenders consciousness (matī) and wisdom (medhā), and brings under the control of tapas the senses (indriyam).

Hymn VI.139 :

The tree with roots that descend downwards (that is, the tree that grows downwards) is a frequently restored to metaphor in yoga and tantrism to refer to the brain from which descend all operational 'nādis'. That this is what is meant here also receives confirmation from the mention of the figure 'thirty-three' which, wherever it occurs in the Vedas, may be taken as referring to the 33 devas, 12 above (Ādityas in Sky), 11 in the middle (Rudras in antarikṣa) and 8 below (Vasus on earth plus 2 others). (Here, these devas are thought of as residing in the body itself in the same relative positions). Similarly, the reference to 1000 leaves (sahasraparṇā) may be taken as signifying the various cakras that are in the human body.

The drying-up of heart, etc. (Śuśyatu) appearing in verse 2 signifies the heat generated in tapas. The love, attachment and

the longing for union that find mention in the hymn are to be read as symbolising the desire of the individual soul (self) for merging with the over-soul, Rudra, who is the speaker of the hymn.

Hymn VI.140 :

This is the saṃskāra of the first feeding.

Hymn VI.141 :

This is the ear-boring saṃskāra ceremony.

Hymn VI.142 :

To appreciate the real (esoteric) significance of this hymn, a reference must be made to verse IX.4.13, where barley is equated with breath. Thus, this hymn must be read as a paean to breath, and all the details, such as 'springing high', 'bursting all the vessels', (verse 1), 'rising high to heaven, being exhaustless as the sea' (verse 2), and making it 'eaters exhaustless' (verse 3), etc. all fall neatly into this picture of breath as the esoteric subject of the hymn.

7. Book VII (analysis)

Hymn VII.1 :

This is a mystical expression of meditation techniques of Yoga, Verse 1 describes the four stages (the third being dreamless sleep, and fourth, turiya or samādhi) of yoga which is reached through 'truth' pervading the heart of the aspirant with the guidance of Vāk. In the fourth stage is obtained (reached) the complete brahma-vidyā (brahman). Rudra, as Agni, is referred to in verse 2, (His father is dyau and mother prthvi), and starting from antarikṣa, he is thought of as becoming (in his tapas) cosmos itself.

Hymn VII.2 and 3 :

Atharvan (the first or father) is the first to imitate Rudra in tapas and become one with him. The term 'svayā tanvā tanvam airayata' (of his own self he sent his body forward) signifies a tantric performance.

Hymn VII.4 :

Vāyu, the lord of breath, (Rudra) is invoked along with the 33 devas, who are 'yoked' (viyuj) (a tangential reference to yoga).

Hymn VII.5 :

In verses 4 and 5 of this hymn, it is mentioned that the devas carried out two kinds of sacrifices. The first was a yajna with Puruṣa as the victim ; being confused, they sacrificed a dog and a cow ; (the dog, śvan, here is a symbol of sound, and the cow a symbol of light, that is to say, they lit up lamps and muttered prayers); but finding it not very productive, they conducted a new type of ritual in which the sacrifice was performed mentally (this is tapas), and which required no animal slaughter. In verses 3 and 5, a wish is uttered that we (mortals) should also perform this type of mental sacrifice (tapas).

Hymn VII.22 :

In this hymn to Savitar, it is said that he gave ' matijyoti ' (which may be translated as ' wisdom ') (verse 1).

Hymn VII.35 (36) :

The only point of interest in this hymn is in verse 2, where the body is said to contain hundred veins (hiraḥ = nāḍi) and thousand tubes (dhamanaḥ = nāḍi).

Hymn VII.36 (37) :

In verse 1, nakedness is said to be ' body covered with a robe, inherited from Manu ! '

Hymn VII.43 (44) :

Verse 1 refers to brahma-vidyā, which can both bless and cause misfortune ; according to verse 2, it has deep within it three syllables (vācā here), namely a, u and m, making the single word aum, which as soon as it is uttered is heard no more. (It is eternally vibrating in the universe).

Hymn VII.44 (48) :

Sinīvālī (goddess of the New Moon) is said in verse 3 to be the consort (Śakti) of Viṣṇu.

Hymn VII.51 (53) :

Brhaspati appears in verse 1 as priestly power protecting from malignant thoughts, and Indra, (verse 2) as princely power, ' vouchsafing room and freedom.'

Hymn VII.52 (54) :

This is an important hymn in which the Aśvins are asked to give knowledge, or consciousness, samjñānam, which some scholars incorrectly render as harmony, which it cannot be here.

Hymn VII.53 (55) :

The powers attained by controlled breathing of prāṇa and apāṇa (sayuja—verse 2), are described here. Long life results (verse 2), and disease (yakṣma, verse 6) is driven away. From deep darkness (tamas), this yogic exercise takes man to jyoti (celestial light), which is the same as immortality.

Hymn VII.54 (56 and 57) :

The Rg, Yajur and Sama Vedas are worshipped (verse 1), and a prayer is uttered (verse 2) that these stay always with the poet. It appears that it is the brahmā (Atharvan) priest's main concern in view of his duties which call for a thorough knowledge of all these three vedas.

Hymn VII.60 (62) :

This is an allegory in the form of houses being addressed, (it is not a single house, but many, grhāh, that are addressed) a detail which some scholars have overlooked and treated the poem as being an address to his house by an individual, the poet, on his going away on a journey. The 'house' is a symbolic expression for a human body, and the esoteric meaning is to be found in the poet, obviously a tantric, being able to leave his own body, enter into others, and later return to his own, all at his will. It is only when viewed as an allegory of this sort, that the various details to be found in the hymn find a satisfactory meaning.

Hymn VII.61 (63) :

Tapas and austerities are undertaken with a view to attaining sacred knowledge and wisdom (brahma-vidyā) through the aid of Agni. (The poem is easily interpreted and there is no scope for dispute over this meaning.)

Hymn VII.66 (68) :

Here, the Sacred Knowledge or Power is 'brahman', and it is said to be everywhere.

Hymn VII.67 (69) :

Here, this Sacred Power (brahma-vidyā) is treated as if it is a part of oneself, just as the indriyās (senses), ātmā (soul) and dravinam (property).

Hymn VII.79 (84) :

Amāvāsiyā—the night of the New Moon—is a holy occasion when devas and sādhyas all assemble together. The time is an auspicious one.

Hymn VII.80 (86) :

Full Moon Night is also an auspicious time.

Hymn VII.83 (88) :

Varuṇa's bonds produce evil dreams and misfortune ; they are the cause of 'sin' ; when they are cut off, immortality (sukrtasya lokam) is attained.

Hymn VII.84 (89) :

Agni is intellectual power—'virāj' (verse 1). Indra, 'a wild beast, mountain-staying' has a missile (sṛk) with keen rim (pavim tigman) for smiting foes (verse 2). (The word sṛk is an obsolete one, derived from the root 'sṛk', and meaning arrow or spear, and here a pointed horn-like object.).

Hymn VII.87 (92) :

Rudra is fire in the waters, and has entered into plants and herbs (verse 1 ; he shaped (kṛp) all these beings (verse 2).

Hymn VII.95 (100) :

This is plainly a hymn to breath-control and other yogic practices. The phrases of verse 1, namely the pair of 'up-thrusters and down-thrusters' would refer to prāṇa and apāṇa ; similarly, the terms, ātōdinau, nitōdinau, and santōdinau in verse 2 correspond to prāṇa, vyāṇa, and samāṇa. In verse 3, the term 'medram' refers to nāḍis.

Hymn VII.96 (101) :

The term 'vṛkau' (wolf) which is usually translated in this context as 'kidneys' would perhaps refer to the channels through

which semen passes, signifying the control of the out-flow of semen (a tantric practice) as the meaning of the whole hymn, the remaining phrases of this one-verse hymn easily fitting into the ancillary exercises leading to this result.

Hymns VII.100 (105) and 101 (106) :

In these two hymns, the various obstacles to worship arising from the sub-conscious, namely bad dreams, (unreality), fantasies, etc., are removed through brahman (brahma-vidyā).

Hymn VII.102 (107) :

This is a curious hymn, which seems to indicate that a full brahmacārin is not subject to any social control. 'I will urinate standing up' means perhaps 'I will indulge in sex freely'.

Hymn VII.104 (109) :

'The dappled Cow, good milker, never without a calf, whom Varuṇa gave Atharvan, being happy with Bṛhaspati's alliance, arranging her body according to his will, etc.' of this hymn refers to the body (and soul) of the brahmacārin.

Hymn VII.105 (110) :

This is clearly an exhortation to holy life, as a wandering mendicant, given to austerities. The hymn is very clear in its wording.

Hymn VII.106 (111) :

Here, we have a prayer to Agni for immortality.

Hymn VII.109 (114) :

This is a hymn which purports to pray for success in dice-play. Actually, the success prayed for is in tapas (to reach samādhi). In verse 1, kali, and babhru refer to Siva and the word akṣa to the rosary bead. Verse 2, refers to two kinds of oblations to gods namely ghee and dust (ashes), which point to yajna, the sacrificial ritual, and tapas (yoga) respectively. Verse 2 mentions the brahmacāry who was formerly a 'performer of sacrifices' (huve).

Hymn VII.111 (116) :

The term, kukṣi, used in this one verse hymn, as 'the holder of Soma' and said to belong to Indra, 'being the very soul of devas

and human beings', etc. is not the belly, but the testicles, for in line 2, it is said to be 'the sire of offspring', and it is the place which makes those 'whose are elsewhere (dead fathers)' glad and happy (since it is the source of what keeps the line of progeny unbroken).

8. *Book VIII (analysis).*

Hymn VIII.2 :

I would give to this hymn the title 'Invitation to Yoga', for while talking of keeping a man free from death's fangs, it uses words and phrases which are usually associated with yoga. In verse 9, for example, a rampart, 'paridhih' is placed as a protection, which seems to be a yantra, or mandala. The patient (initiate) is taught the arts (of controlling) prāṇa and apāna (in verse 11) which give him health and long life. He is provided with a paridhāna, a protecting robe (verse 16). He is advised not to waste his time in adorning and embellishing himself (verse 17). He is told that his rice (soul) and barley (breaths) will be 'auspicious' (verse 18).

Hymn VIII.5 :

The maṇi (usually translated, and not rightly as 'amulet') is here 'a strong, magic cord' (verse 1). (In verse 4 also, it is referred to as a cord pratisara). It is said to be a 'śrāktý' which is taken to mean 'made of śrāktý wood', but could well mean merely sharp and powerful, (from the root 'srk' meaning 'pointed'). It is the 'chief of all the plants' and the term 'plant' is here, as elsewhere, a symbol of Rudra and of Rudra's powers.

Hymn VIII.6 :

There can be no doubt that this is a black magic spell to protect women from sexual assault.

Hymns VIII.9 and 10 :

These two hymns describe 'virāj' (or 'virāt'). They are full of riddles and puzzles connected with 'virāj'. 'Virāj' is the supreme Power (Energy, Śakti, brahmar), which sustains and upholds the universe and all things therein. It is sometimes a male being, Puruṣa, Prajāpati, Agni, etc., and sometimes, a female,

being the daughter of one of them, apparently their Śakti. In verse IX.7, it is said to be the father of brahman, being obviously the Śakti which endows the brahma-vidyā with power. Virāj has two calves, heaven and earth, 'dyaupṛthvi', which have arisen from water (verse 1). Its calf is Agni (Rudra) (verse IX.2). Sacrifices follow her (that is, they are made effective by her Śakti), and it is by her control that 'the spirit moveth' (verse IX.8). Kaśyapa, the Sun, is asked by six ṛsis to describe Virāj (verse IX.7). They are told that though she does not herself breathe, yet she is the breath of all creatures (8). She is the power that sustains dawn and evening, the two daughters of Sūryā (12). 'Seven streams of butter (the seven breaths) have come into world' (18). Eight elements (probably, the eight angas of yoga) have 'sprung up, first born of order ṛtu', (verse 21). They are called priests 'ṛtvij' to connect them with 'ṛtu'. Verse 23 indicates that there are eight indriyās (Indrās) (sensory elements), six Yamas (or breath control techniques, yamas) and seven ṛsis (or breaths); five elements, namely earth, air, water, fire and ether make up men (bodies), waters and herbs. Verse 26 makes it clear that Virāj is the One Cow (Power), Single Spirit, sole law and one divine being.

(It may be mentioned here that in Rg Veda X.90.8, Virāj is said to have been born from Puruṣa. In AV IX.2.5, she is identified with Vāk, and in IX.10.24, with Vāk, Air, Earth, Prajāpati, and Death, and is also said to be the Regent of the Sādhyas, the Perfect Ones. In AV XI.4.12, she is identified with Prāṇa.)

In verses 1 to 29 of hymn IX.10, Virāj is said to have at first been 'This', that is, the Universe, and then step by step, she, that is the Universe, spread out, and all things emanated from her. Finally, (verses 30 to 33) she is said to have become Knowledge. Throughout verses 3 to 29, the phrase 'he who knows this' (ya evam veda) runs as a refrain, as if stressing the value of knowledge.

9. Book IX (analysis).

Hymn IX.1:

Under the title of 'honey-whip', (madhu kaśā), this hymn describes the nature and powers of the 'sacred thread of brahmins' (yajnopaviṣṭam). It is so called because it is amṛt (verse 2), giver

of immortality, where lies bliss (ānanda) and extreme sweetness (verse 23). It is said to have been born from heaven, earth, etc. (that is, it is the universe itself) and is said to belong to Āśvins. Verses 1 and 19 whose principal subject is honey furnish the term 'honey-whip'. It is said to be the progenitor of 'all forms and fashions' (verse 5) which are associated with Śakti (daughter of Vasus, mother of Ādityas, etc.). It endows the wearer with splendour, strength, power and might (verse 18). It is said to have seven kinds of honey, namely brahmin, king, draught-ox, milch-cow, barley, rice and honey itself. 'Whoever knows this' (ya evam veda) becomes himself 'a man endowed with sweetness' (verse 22). This means that the esoteric knowledge of brahma-vidyā itself is honey, that is, he who knows this gains possession of the all-powerful Śakti. (verses 24), and becomes immortal (6). Verse 24 also clearly refers to the 'sacred cord' (upavīta).

Hymn IX.2 :

Kāma forms the subject of this hymn. He is Manu (verse 23), that is Passion or Ardour or Desire personified, and is infinitely strong. He was the first born (yajne prathamah) (verse 19), he is 'triplyguarded' (that is to say, he is spread throughout the three regions of the universe), and has as his mail of defense (varman), the brahman power (verse 16). His daughter is Dhenū, the wish-fulfilling cow, who is also Vāk, and Virāj. It is she who provides him with power to make men dream evil things (verses 3 to 5 ; also 25). He is, therefore, the Lord of Desires, and creates lovely and auspicious forms, making them real at his will.

Hymn IX.3 :

The esoteric subject of this hymn is 'mokṣa' (or immortality) which is cloaked under an allegorical description of a house (śālā), which symbolises the human body. 'Ties and fastenings' hold this house, which 'holds all precious things' (mind, spirit, life, etc.) (verse 1). There are props, supports and connectors.

The shackles that bind this house are unloosed (by the guru) through mantras (vācā) (that is the brahman spell of brahma-vidyā) (verse 2, etc. seq.). Inside, bound-in dwells the 'lady of the house' (mānasya patni) by whom is meant 'the spirit or the soul' (verse 5) ; she is asked to be gracious to the body (tanu) (verse 6). By

means of brahman (the spell or mantra of the brahma-vidyā), 'the diadem is securely tied upon the central beam' (verse 8), by which is meant the brain situated on the apex of the central spinal column. It was built (verse 11) for creating progeny (verse 20). Agni is the mansion's lord (verse 12). Agni (supreme soul) 'lies like a babe unborn within this house' (verse 22) and all things, such as Water and Fire, necessary for offering the inner sacrifice (tapas) are within it (verse 22). 'Wherever we travel, we carry the house (that is the body) like a bride . . . ' (verse 24).

Hymn IX.4 :

The ṛṣabha, Bull, is an important symbol of divine power, of procreation and of creation itself. The Creator is described in this hymn by means of the symbol of a Bull. Verse 1 tells us he is 'the ruddy one of Brhaspati', which would make him the red form of Agni, that is Rudra, and the act of creation is compared to a stretching (tan) of a line (tantu) (thread). The association of the words with 'tanu', body, can be readily recognized, as also with the cosmic weaving around the Skambha mentioned elsewhere. Amongst his very many qualities referred to in various verses, particularly noteworthy are the following: he is referred to as 'sthāvira', a very significant term, in verse 2; his body is said to be a great stone (5), another significant word; women are asked to go with him according to their pleasure (24), which is indicative of the sexual powers of Rudra. (He is elsewhere referred to as Gandharva Viśvāvasu, round whom are gathered Apsarases); he has many forms (viśvarupāni) (verse 1); he is red in colour and is cloudy (nabhasa) (verse 24). The anatomical parts of the Bull are not at all like that of the ordinary bull. For example, he possess 'dew claws' (verse 16) (kuṣṭikā) like those of Sarama. Each of the parts is peculiar in nature, and in many of them, devas are said to reside. For example, his rump is said to belong to the Ādityas (verse 13). He is in fact a synthesized (or syncretized) Bull.

Hymn IX.5 :

This is a most esoteric and important hymn. The subject matter is said to be an offering of a goat and five-rice-dishes, but these obviously are symbols of something else.

The word for goat is 'aja', which word has another meaning, namely unborn, that is, one without birth or death; this would

make it an immortal one, namely soul in this context. That is why in verses 1 and 3, the 'aja' is said to 'cross the great darkness' and step into the third firmament, naka, the sky. It is, in verse 7, said to be Agni and Jyoti. It is in verse 8 that we come across mention of 'five dishes' which are said to accompany the goat 'unto the three lights', that is unto 'the third firmament'. The term for rice-dish is 'odana', whose etymology has been declared to be not clear. Perhaps, it is connected in some way with annam (food) with the prefix 'od-' derived from ud-. Now, the breaths are also said to be 'anna'; and the five rice dishes could, therefore, very well symbolise the 'five breaths' (prāna, apāna, vyāna, samāna and udāna) which are an inseparable element in life. (The words odāna and udana bear a striking similarity in sound). The goat in verse 13 is said to be born from fire, that is to say, the soul is of the nature of Agni. (There is, here, a play on words—usual in the Vedas,—as in viprah, viprasya, and vipaścīt). On the ground that the goat is a symbol of the soul, the term 'cooked goat' in verse 18 must be seen as referring to 'tapas'. The first goat, that is the Universal Soul (or in other words, Rudra) is described in verses 20 and 21; and the microcosm, that is man, and the macrocosm, that is the Universe, or Rudra, are thereby homologized. Virāj (Śakti) is its head, and Śraddha, its breath, etc. Verse 23 et. seq. give some details of the ritual of goat sacrifice and the five-dishes offering, as well as the benefits that arise therefrom. In verse 32—36, we have the formula 'he who knows' (ya evam veda). In these five verses, the goat and five dishes are linked with (1) season-making, and (2) season-gathering, etc.

Hymn IX.6 :

In verse, 1, we find the phrase 'he who knows the pratyakṣa brahman', that is to say, 'he who sees the Absolute Brahman face to face.' This and the next verse, as also verse 17, go on to describe the various parts of this Absolute Brahman in Samādhi (or tapas). The encounter between the two is described as the visit of a guest, the guest being the Absolute Brahman. Verses 40 to 48 carry the refrain 'he who knows' (ya evam veda), that is to say, by these rituals one becomes a Knower (of the brahma-vidyā), or in other words, he acquires for himself the status of the Ultimate Brahman. In the last verse, namely verse 62, it is assured that 'he

who knoweth thus' attains immortality ('worlds rich in jyoti he conquers', as the verse puts it.).

Hymn IX.7 :

This hymn describes the various anatomical parts of the Ox (the primeval Creator) in the same manner as the Bull was described in Hymn IX.4 above. This Ox is also a syncretized animal, just as the Bull was.

Hymn IX.8 :

This hymn is taken to be usually as a black magic spell for driving out diseases. It may be possible to show that there is much esoteric material in it, but I do not propose doing so here.

Hymns IX.9 and 10 :

With some changes, these two hymns are to be found in the RV also partly, as hymn I.164, and partly to a less extent in other RV hymns. They are full of riddles, puzzles, and enigmatic statements. Their essential points have been discussed in my 'Rg Vedic Studies', and there is no need to repeat my comments here.

However, there is one very important point to which it may be useful to pay some detailed attention as it will reveal the difference in approach between the two saṃhitas to concepts of this nature. It is to be found in verse 18 of this hymn, whose counterpart in the Rg Veda is hymn I.164.39 (with a very minor change.). The AV version reads : 'ꣳco akṣare parame vyoman yasmin deva adhi viśve niṣeduh yas tan na veda kim ꣳcā kariṣyati ya it tad viduste amī samāstate.' (In the Rg Veda, the amī of the second line is replaced by ime.).

The literal meaning is : 'In the syllable of the verse (ꣳc) in the highest firmament, on which all the gods sat down : he who knoweth not that, what will he do with the verse ? They who know that sit together yonder.'

The esoteric meaning, however, is something else. The word ꣳc refers to the 'spine' (vide AV IX.6.1.), the 'highest firmament' is consequently, the 'brain' ; the 'akṣara' should be the immortal element (and not syllable) where 'all the powers of the individual

(the devas) are brought together (in Samādhi, or by the rise of Kundalinī). That is to say, the verse refers to the final stage of yogic and tantric practice.

The difference in the meaning of this verse as conceived by the two vedas is due to the yajna (sacrificial) concept prevailing in the Rg as against the tapas (inner sacrificial) concept prevailing in the Atharva Veda.

10. *Book X (analysis).*

Hymn X.1 :

This is apparently a magic spell, and verse 3 makes it appear that such practices prevailed amongst all castes, brahmins, kṣatriyas and śūdras, and women also indulged in them. From verse 2, it is seen that some sort of effigy was used in weaving the spell.

Hymn X.2.

This hymn may be treated either as a Creation Hymn (on the cosmic scale) or a 'dhyana' (concentration of mind) hymn (on the microcosmic scale). It succeeds in setting up a homology between man and the universe seen as Puruṣa. The style is that of an Upaniṣad, especially the Keṇa.

Verses 1 to 20 draw attention to Puruṣa by concentrating the mind (dhyāna) on the parts of the body and their creation, somewhat like the 'nyāsa' of yoga. Verses 21 to 28, carry the process further by directing the mind towards Brahman the Absolute; they set up an identity between the two brahmas, the priest and the Absolute. Verses 27 and 26 refer to Atharvan, the first fire priest, who resorted to tapas and obtained mokṣa by having his soul pass through the 'brahmarandhra', a typical tantric act.

Verse 31 is particularly important since it refers to the body as eight-wheeled (eight angas) and nine-doored (nine orifices). Within the human body is the soul, 'the golden treasure-chest, celestial, begirt with light.' Verse 32 provides a clue to many otherwise dark passages in the A.V., which calls this soul a 'yakṣa' (as in X.7.38 later). It goes on to say of this soul (the 'golden treasure-chest'), that it has 'three spokes and three supports', which might refer either to the sacred syllable and/or to the three

guṇās. From verse 28 to the end, the refrain 'ya evam veda' runs continuously, and such a knower is said to be in a position to attain mokṣa, that is immortality.

Hymn X.3 :

This is quite probably just a magic spell.

Hymn X.4 :

This is a riddle hymn which, while referring to snakes, and their poison, and so on, has quite obviously a very great mystery to impart. The first line of verse 8, is the same as has been noticed in two or three passages earlier, for example VI.56.1. It reads : 'Let him not close the opened mouth, nor open that which now is closed.' (A Kundalinī Yoga symbolism). The second line provides a clue to this. It reads : 'Two snakes are in this field, and both, female and male, are powerless.' This refers to the nādis that rising from the yoni pass criss-crossing towards the neck, where they merge in the suṣumna nādi.

Hymn X.5 :

This hymn looks like a magical spell, but verses 1 to 5 clarify that the powers sought and exercised are achieved through association (iṣṭave yogāya) with the aid of brahman, (brahmayogai vah yunajmi), (mantras of brahma-vidyā). The two phrases appear as refrain in all these five verses. These mantras confer the power, force and strength of Indra to achieve victory. Verses 7 to 10 emphasize that the waters that are used in the ritual are both purificatory material and a sort of weapon (meni) (verses 15 to 21). They are sprinkled about to form a yantra, and the poet is anxious that the form (or shape) they (the sprinkled drops) have taken should not be washed away. These waters confer splendour, and also assist in destroying obstacles to the fulfilment of the rituals. From verses 21 to 36, especially from verse 25 onwards, we find the poet flying about (like Viṣṇu's strides) achieving various objectives. From verses 37 to 41, property (wealth) and splendour (glory) are sought. (They refer to earthly and sacred powers, of a rājan and a brahmin respectively). From verses 42 to 50, removal of enemies and obstacles are sought to be achieved. Here, the Water yantra is conceived of as an instrument of war, an arrow, or a bolt.

Hymn X.6 :

This hymn appears on the surface like a magic spell, but the instruments for achieving the objectives mentioned are the mantras of brahma-vidyā which, from one point of view, may appear as no different from a magic spell. The Atharvans and the Āngirases (in verse 20) are said to have used it. The amulet (or whatever else the power-generating instrument may be) is said to have been tied 'together with brahman' (verse 3), and the rite is said (verse 35) to have been conducted with fuel kindled in 'brahman' rendered to Agni Jātavedas, which implies a tapas ritual.

Hymn X.7 :

The skambha (pillar) referred to in this hymn is the pillar of Fire which stands (like a linga) upholding heaven above the earth. It is the 'member' (angah) of tapas, that is of Rudra who is in tapas (being the cosmos). It is the light of Agni and the breath of Mārisvan (verse 2). (These find an explanation in detail in my 'Rg Vedic Studies'). In verse 7, we find that in skambha is the past and future. It has revealed the brahman power (that is the brahma-vidyā) (verse 10), and within it are all the 36 devas (13). They who know (ye . . . viduh) the brahman in Puruṣa know the Supreme Being (parameṣṭin) and also the brāhmanam (the brahma vidyā) (verse 17). The brahman who is in tapas as the universe, (the jyeṣṭha brahmā), who breathes the two Winds, and has the Āngirases (the sun and moon), and who is in the six regions (the manifest Universe), etc. is the Supreme Being (here Rudra). He is the Prajāpati who stands as a reed in the ocean (verse 41). (This connects with the verses I.1.2 and 3, etc., wherever the term reed occurs). Verses 42 to 44 are important for their esoterism. Two young maids (day and night) of different colours weave endlessly, a web (tantram is the word used in the text.) round this male of six pegs (the skambha who is spread out in the six regions). This is a symbolic reference to the birth of human beings. The whole process of creation is here viewed as a tantric ritual around the linga of Rudra.

Hymn X.8 :

This hymn develops further the concept that was opened out in the previous one, namely hymn X.7, and the glorification of the

skambhas' powers and achievements is continued. Verse 9 has a double meaning. It says : 'The bowl with mouth inclined downwards and bottom upwards holds stored within it every form of glory. Thereon sit together the Seven Rsis who have become this mighty one's protectors.' This bowl is in one sense the heaven and the other the brain cavity (cranium). The seven Rsis are the seven breaths, who are as powerful as the devas. The verse sets man as the homologue of the universe (Rudra) (mahat). This makes the skambha correspond to the spine of the human body. It has a golden swan with two wings (pakṣan) which flies to heaven, supporting the devas, etc. (verse 18). The haṇsa corresponds to the breathing of the individual (ham plus sa), the two wings being prāṇa and apāṇa, who together support the devas, that is the individual life. In verse 37, and 38, the universe's creation reappears as an act of weaving and there is also the Knower (of the brahma-vidyā). The human body is (verse 43) said to be a 'lotus flower of nine-doors' (orifices), enclosed in triple strands' (guṇas, sattva, rajas and tamas) within which is the soulful prodigy (yakṣa). The Knowers of Sacred Knowledge (brahma-vidyā) (that is practitioners of yoga) are aware of this yakṣa, that is themselves. The wise (dhīrah) are 'free from desire (akāma), firm, immortal, self-existent contended with the essence, and lacking nothing. Free from fear of death is he who knoweth that soul (skambha or himself) courageous, youthful, undecaying' (verse 44).

In these two hymns, the Cow and the hundred rice dishes constitute the central piece. This is a variation of 'the goat and five rice dishes' theme of hymn IX.5. The Cow is the equivalent of the goat, which was interpreted as the soul. Perhaps the substitution of the cow for the goat is to emphasize that this is an individual of superior nature (a great priest, perhaps). There is nothing in these hymns which were not foreshadowed in the earlier piece, namely hymn IX.5. However, some of the verses, especially in hymn 10, are very illuminating. The reference to seven pravatah (ordinarily flood), and the seven parāvatah (ordinarily distance) may be taken to symbolise the seven angas of yoga (yama, niyama, etc.) which control and direct the incoming and outgoing breaths. By the line : 'he who knows the head of sacrifice, he may receive the holy Cow' is meant 'he who has attained the brahma-vidyā will be able to have the supreme knowledge of the self.'

Verse 24 (of hymn 10) makes it clear that 'only he who is able to exercise self-control can be said to be victorious, and only he can enjoy the Cow as his eye, that is be able to see his own soul.' Hymn 10.30 makes interesting reading. It says: 'The Cow is Heaven, the Cow is Earth, the Cow is Viṣṇu, Lord of Life. The Sādhyas and the Vasus have drunk the outpourings of the Cow.' This verse really means that immortality lies in the absorption (of the individual soul) in the soul of the Universe (the Cow), but later Hinduism has concretised this noble abstract concept into the drinking of the ordinary cow's urine (and other effusions) as a way of attaining paradise. (It may be recalled here that in tantrism, the term 'Cow's flesh' symbolises the human tongue, and 'eating the cow's flesh' signifies 'the juice that pours into the mouth at the time of samādhi').

11. *Book XI (analysis).*

Hymn XI.1 :

I would give the title 'Tapas-I' to this hymn, the title Tapas-II being reserved for hymn XI.3). The universe is seen in verse 1 of this hymn, as having sprung out of Aditi's tapas. (As explained earlier, cooking the odana is a symbolic expression for tapas, and here, it is 'brahmāudana'). In verse 3, Agni is conducting a great tapas for Power (vīryāya). The seven ṛṣis of verse 3 are the seven 'controllers' (yamās) of yoga. Verses 13 and 14 of this hymn hint at some sort of 'vāmacāra' ritual involving ritual copulation, it being said there that the Waters had ascended her) a woman who is asked to go away) for bearing (impregnating); the woman is asked to come back again, after seizing whatever is worshipful, and leaving back others, etc. Verse 16 is undoubtedly a reference to a continuing tantric tapas. Agni is asked there to heat the boiling cauldron (apparently a man in tapas) (tapasā tapiṣṭa, Agni is told). Again, in the same verse, the devas are also found to be in tapas (tapasā tapantu). A prohibition against non-brahmins doing tapas is found in verse 32. Verses 28 and 37 makes it evident that the objective of the tapas is immortality. Verse 27 indicates that the brahmins received (as a reward?) 'cleansed, and purified holy women!' (Concubines slaves).

Hymn XI.2 :

From this hymn, it is clear that Bhava and Śarva are the two warrior attendants of Rudra, being themselves another form (avatār) (vyuhas) of the hostile aspect of Rudra.

Hymn XI.3 :

As mentioned in the comments on Hymn XI.1, this verse should be entitled 'Tapas-II', being a continuation of the discussion on that topic which commenced earlier. Verse 1 makes this clear by stating: 'Of that Odana, Bṛhaspati is the head, Brahmā the mouth.' Verse 2 is very important. It says: 'Heaven and Earth are the ears, the Sun and Moon are the eyes, the seven Rsis are the vital airs, prāṇa and apāna.' Verses 3 to 21 give additional details, all of which lead to the question posed in verse 22: 'I ask thee, of this Odana, what is the mighty magnitude?' The answer which is clear by now is 'This is the soul, (spirit, brahman) of Rudra (the super-soul) in tapas.' Verse 27 has a curious expression, namely 'brahmavādinah' to signify 'those who discuss the brahma-vidyā' which is rendered by scholars by the pedestrian term 'theologians'. Verse 26 to 49 are in fact discussions of this very nature, being concerned with what the rice dish is and what are the implications of 'eating' (that is attempting an union) with it. Verses 50 to 56 provide the answer, and that is (1) This rice-dish is indeed the summit (viṣṭapa) of the ruddy one (bradhna) (which can only mean Rudra in this context) (50); (2) He who knoweth thus (ya evam veda) becomes one with Rudra (51); (3) It is out of Rudra that the 33 devas emanated (52); (4) Rudra instituted the sacrifice so that they (that is, the devas) may realise this truth (53); (5) One who desires to know and realise this truth must resort to breath-control exercises (54); (6) Otherwise, the breath will burn him up (55); and he will die a premature death due to not controlling his breath (that is not doing tapas properly) (56).

Hymn XI.4 :

This hymn should be entitled 'Breath Control', for it is a glorification of Prāṇa, which is the vital spirit, that is Life. This is made clear in the very first verse which is a sublime one. It runs 'prāṇāya namo yasya sarvam idam vaśe yo bhūtaḥ sarvasya īśvaraḥ yasmin sarvam pratiṣṭhatam' (Homage to prāṇa, he who hath

dominion o'er the universe, and who hath become the Sovran Lord of all, on whom the whole depends'). Verses 2 to 7 describe how prāṇa creates life. Apāna joins prāṇa in verse 8. Prāṇa gives form to life (jīvam) (verse 9), but in verse 14, it turns out to be 'takman'. Prāṇa is rice, and draft ox, whereas apāna is barley (verse 13). The past, the future, everything depends on prāṇa (prāṇe ha bhūtam bhavyam ca prāṇe sarvam pratiṣṭhatam). (verse 15). Prāṇa is a swan (haṁsa) (verse 21), (when he rises up, haṁ is out-going breath, and one foot remains unmoved as 'sa' breath inside). Anyone in full control of breath is lord of everything and is in possession of brahman (verses 26 and 24). So, it is that one binds down (holds in control) breath (verse 26).

Hymn XI.5 :

The title of this verse should be 'The brahmacārin'. Verse 1 shows him mastering the world through 'tapas', and so, being in harmony with the devas. His apprenticeship with his guru is seen as a sort of re-birth (verse 3). His guru (ācārya), we are told, takes him into his belly and holds him there for three nights, whereafter he comes out (is born) as a wonder even to the devas. The first brahmacāri was born out of tapas, and it was from him that Brahma and other devas emerged (verse 5). (This first brahmacārin is Rudra). He carries a lighted fuel; clad in a black buckskin, and with a beard, he goes roaming about wandering all over the world, even making far off places come near him (verse 6). The earth and heaven were his first bhikṣa (alms) (verse 9). He is the guardian of the sacred lore (brahman), keeping one part of it hidden (that is brahma-vidyā of tapas), and revealing only the other (that is knowledge of the sacrifices, that is Rg and other vedas), and he is Brahmā, the Knower (verse 10). The two aspects of this Knowledge are one revealed and one hidden; each has its own Agni and they both are within the brahmacāry (verse 11). It is the brahmacāry's seed poured from his generative organ (linga, śepah) which creates life on earth (verse 12). His guru is death (mr̥tyu), that is to say, he is 'dead to the world' (verse 14). The brahmacāri gave from his own body, everything that Varuṇa demanded (verse 15), that is to say, through tapas he freed himself from Varuṇa's bondage which holds his soul bound to the body (which is his 'sin'). It is the tapas of brahmacāri which protects the kingdom (the world) (verse 17). It is the breath within the brahmacāri (that is, his spirit or

soul) which protects the spirit (or soul) of everyone (verse 22). The brahmacāri holds Brahmā, and all the devas, as if they are woven together by himself, and it is from him that emanate prāṇa, apāṇa, voice, mind (consciousness), heart and brahman (Knowledge) (verse 24). It is he who gives sight, hearing, glory, food, progeny, blood and belly (verse 25). Standing in the midst of the Waters (heavenly), he practices tapas, and when he has bathed (that is completed his tapas), he shines forth in brown and yellow colours. (It will be seen how vastly the brahmacāri of the Atharva Veda differs from the brahmacāris of the Dharma Śāstras and later times. The former undergoes through tapas, a transformation from man to god, Rudra-Śiva, and the knowledge is not just the three Vedas, or the Upaniṣads or the Vedānta, but total yoga.

Hymn XI.6 :

This is a prayer addressed to various devas.

Hymn XI.7 :

The 'ucchiṣṭa' of this hymn is NOT the residue of sacrificial oblations, as the word is interpreted later, but the Absolute of the Universe. (Whitney has mentioned in his note on this hymn that Deussen was of this view).

Hymn XI.8 :

This is another of the Atharva Veda's Essay on the Origin of Man. Verse 1 says that Passion and Thought were the originating elements. The whole process is likened to a wedding and the 'wooers' are said (in verse 2) to be tapas and karma, meaning that the forces that set off the manifestation of the universe were tapas and yama sacrificial rituals. Then came Brahmā and other devas (verses 2 and 3). The next creations were prāṇa and apāṇa eye, ear, death, disease, breathing, voice, mind, etc. (verse 4). Verse 6 repeats that with tapas and sacrificial rituals life began. From this, the hymn goes on to describe the various parts of human anatomy in verses 11 to 16. This may, on the surface appear as childish recital, but in fact, it has a very important role to play as the next succeeding verses show, for the intention is to identify various devas as residing in these respective parts. This is a tantric exercise, known as 'nyāsa', which is an advanced yoga technique.

From verses 26 to 30, brahman (Power) is shown as being acquired by the brahmacāry and in 31, the Knower (Vidvān) becomes himself the brahman's self since all deities are seated in him as cows (gavāh) in a cowstall (goṣṭah). Verse 33 views man as being made up of three elements (like guṇas) one of which (the sāttvic) goes to the sky, one (the rajasīc) goes to the antarikṣa, and one (the tamasic) remains on earth. From verse 34, it would be legitimate to infer that 'water-burial', (that is, casting the body into floating rivers), was also practised in ancient times, just as it is to-day at Benares.

Hymn XI.9 :

The 'Arbudi' and the 'Nyarbudi' of this hymn are the two snakes pictured as coiled around Rudra's arms. Verse 5 talks of Arbudi's coils. The word used is 'bhoga' which the dictionary tells us bears, amongst other things the meanings, a snake, and also winding coils, the expanded hood of a snake etc. These are, therefore the arrow, and weapons of war (vyuha) of Rudra. In verses 8 and 14, mention is made of Arbudi's bite (raditah). In verse 12, these two are said to be 'broad gripping arm hooks' (urugrahai bahu ankai). Verse 15 et alia speak of various kinds of spectres produced by them.

Hymn XI.10 :

The 'triṣandhi' of this hymn is a snake (śarpah) (verse 1). It is white-footed (śiti-padi) (verse 6). In verse 13, it is said to be the thunderbolt (vajra) which Brhaspati of the Āngiras race hurled ; it is an Asura-destroying weapon. Verse 27 also confirms that it is a vajra. The name 'triṣandhi' seems to indicate that it is an instrument with three parts forged together (tri + sandhi) in which case it would be the triśūl of Rudra-Śiva.

12. *Book XII (analysis).*

Hymn XII.1 :

This is a paean to Earth as mother, and is a sort of Devi Sūktam. In AV VI.120.2, earth is spoken of as Aditi. In verse 61 of this hymn also earth is called a 'wish-fulfilling Aditi.' The language of this hymn is simple and highly poetical. There are no mysteries. In verse 19, the various forms of Agni are described as earth, herbs,

water, stones, men, kine and horses who are all so many Agnis. In verse 42, barley and rice (that is *prāṇa* and *apāna*) are said to be on earth, and so are the five 'farmers (*kṛṣṭayah*), as they are mentioned along with the breaths. The word *kṛṣṭi* had originally borne the meaning of 'cultivated ground', though later it has come to mean races, people, etc.

Hymn XII.2 :

This hymn talks of two fires, the flesh-eating and householder's, the former apparently meaning the fire of cremation, which is asked, in verse 1, to go southward, being classified along with disease (*yakṣma*) as a *nāda*, which term probably stands for the reeds of the funeral pyre. In verse 4, Agni is said to be a 'tiger in his lair'. A rampart, (*paridhi*) is 'built for the living' (verse 23), which term also appears in verse 44, as a protecting wall of defence; it suggests a sort of yantra or mandala; it is also an *antardhi* (a separating rampart) between gods and men, which should only mean a sacred place, that is a mandala or yantra. In verse 47, Agni is a '*vāhni*' (a *vāhan* or carrier) of Indra, who is (verse 48) an *anadvān* (an ox).

Hymn XII.3 :

Whitney has given to this hymn the caption, 'Cremation as a Sacrifice', but it is more appropriately, referred to as 'Birth and Death', since verses 1 to 25 deal with death and cremation, and 26 to 60 with birth and protection. In verse 5, we find the *Odana*, the universal soul, 'pervading earth and heaven.' In verse 8, Yama offers protection to 'the cooked offering', that is the soul of the dead. *Virāj* (or *Aditi*) occupies the 'fixed quarter' (verse 11), and Brahman, the Power Divine, pervades the three regions (of the universe) (verse 20). Verse 24 enumerates the guardian deities of the four directional regions as Agni in the East, Indra and Maruts in the South, *Varuṇa* in the West, and Soma in the North. (The directions are also symbols of the human body, east meaning chest and front, south being the lower portions, west the back, and north standing for the head). Verses 28 to 32 contain very important material. Drops (*ṣṭokā*), go up and down being heated (*taptah*); they are rice-grains (*taṇḍulam*) and they unite with waters (29). They are '*saṅkhyātā*' (very large in number) or '*asaṅkhyātā*'

(numberless in quantity) (28); the devas sit down together (that is, sit along) with the 'rice grains', which in this context means human souls. The 'ṣṭokā' or drops are apparently individual human souls, which, combining with the waters in the atmosphere (the waters being full of Agni's retas or seed), fall back on earth (are re-born) as new human beings. All this savours of re-birth and, the use of the terms, 'saṅkhyātā' and 'asaṅkhyātā', is deliberate and foreshadows the coming of the saṅkhya doctrine of multiplicity of souls and re-birth. Verse 50 has a curious statement: the devas do tapas (tapanti), whereby they 'glow and shine in heaven' and also 'he that cooks has become golden-coloured'. 'Man' says verse 51 'is born naked', and he is required to cover himself (ātman, soul) and the mouth of his odana (soul) with a home-woven vesture meaning a mandala; the word used here for 'wrap' or 'cover' is 'paridha', and 'paridhi', it must be remembered, is a mandala or yantra. The term 'akṣa' in verse 52 has been rendered as 'dice', but it is really 'seed' as is clear from its association with 'tantu' (thread or string) in the second line, the whole verse signifying the purification power of the 'akṣamālā' of Rudra-Śiva. According to verse 54, the soul in heaven undergoes colour transformation (meaning purification); amongst others the black colour is discarded for the red. (There are, here, some sectarian differences, with extreme tantrists adopting black-coloured robes, and the more moderate 'Śaivite anchorites', the red ones.). From verses 55 to 60, a listing is made of devas, and the 'serpents'; 'arrows' and directions associated with them are as follows:

<i>Over-lords</i>	<i>Serpents</i>	<i>Arrows</i>	<i>Direction</i>
1. Agni	Black	Āditya or Sun	East
2. Indra	Cross-lined	Yama	South
3. Varuṇa	Prḍāku	Food	West
4. Soma	Boa-constrictor (python)	Thunderbolt	North
5. Viṣṇu	Spotted neck	Herbs	Fixed (dhruva)
6. Brāhaspati	White	Plant	Upward (Urdhva)

These have deep significance. (Explanation for the term serpent would require an elaborate discussion, which is not possible here.

It will be presented elsewhere on another occasion, when the whole subject of serpent symbolism in the Vedas will be gone into).

Hymn XII.4 :

The subject matter of this hymn is 'vaśā', which means Cow, and which here is merely a symbol for the brahma-vidyā, as even the verses of this hymn clearly show. Verses 1 and 2 say that 'vaśā' belongs to the brahmins (ṛṣis) who cannot be denied access to it. She can pass on the disease called 'vilohita' (non-red, death), if she is not 'kept under control', that is, if the knowledge is not properly assimilated (verse 4). This vaśā is for devas and brahmins only (verses 10, 11 and 12), and dire punishment awaits others who try to even approach her (meaning 'to acquire this knowledge'). Teaching of this knowledge (vidyā) should begin at the age of three (verse 16), and Bhava and Sarva (attendants of Rudra) are her guardians. 'He who knows' (ya evam veda) owns this vaśā, so the devas have said (verse 22). According to verses 27 and 28, if a brahmin comes to reside in a non-brahmin's house, or on any other occasion of a similar nature, the recitation of this vaśā (knowledge) must not be over-heard by the non-brahmins. Verse 37, sternly forbids any attempt to change, or even improve, the traditional vaśā, and according to verse 38, tapas (cooking) should not be conducted in the house. Verses 42 to 47 describe the methods of teaching it. In verse 47, three sources are mentioned, namely first 'vilipti' (meaning writings), second the cow, mother of the calf, (meaning the recited mantras from which it has been taken down in writing), and third, by direct communication of brahman (power) by the ācārya. Verse 53 makes it perfectly clear that this tapas should not, under any circumstance, be conducted at home.

Hymn XII.5 :

This hymn elaborates further on the same theme as the previous one. The vaśā (Sacred Knowledge) is obtained only through severe tapas (śrameṇa tapasā). In verses 2 to 4, the special characteristics of this vaśā are outlined : 'Invested with truth, surrounded with honour, compassed about with glory ; girt round with inherent power, fortified with faith, protected by consecration, installed at sacrifice, the world the resting place, Brahmā the guide and brahman (brahmā priest) the lord and ruler.' The penalties incurred by a

kṣatriya who attempts to deprive brahmins of this knowledge are fully brought out in verses 5 to 11. This vaśā can, by merely uttering the sound 'hring', (a tantric bīja syllable) bring death of the offender, and it becomes a fierce deva even when roused to slightest anger, symbolised by the statement, 'whisking of the tail.' This vaśā is poison (verse 31), and fever (takman) (if improperly used, that is). Verses 11 to 73 elaborate at great length on the powers of this vaśā.

13. *Book XIII (analysis).*

The four hymns of Book XIII deal with the 'Red One' as the subject. It is generally thought that this refers to the Sun, which is rather odd considering that the sun and the red colour cannot be easily associated with one another. (The dawn is not always red, and in any case, the sun is not to be identified with the dawn even in the Rg Veda). The suggestion that the red colour denotes Uṣas or the rising sun is also a little far-fetched, for if that were the case, the name Uṣas should be found in the hymn which is not so. A deeper examination of the hymn reveals that the red one is in fact a manifestation of something, and if it is connected with the sun, a power behind the sun is contemplated. The sun is in this hymn a Śakti, and obviously a Śakti of Rudra, who usually is the deva referred to as ruddy or the Red One. Also red and black are two colours usually associated with Agni.

Hymn XIII.1 :

The fact that the 'ruddy one' (rohita) 'rises up out of the waters' (verse 1) does not necessarily point to the sun, for Rudra (and Prajapati) also is said to be in the midst of waters in various passages in the AV. In verse 6, there is a repetition of the symbol of the tantu (web) being stretched and supported by aja (skambha) which has been met with elsewhere in the AV. In verse 3, brahman supports the Rohita, and in 13, he is 'the mouth and generator of the sacrifice', a phrase usually applied to Agni. He is vācaspati (verse 17). Verse 16 indicates four possible places of destiny for the dead, (a) earth, (b) the atmosphere (moon), (c) the sky (the sun), and (d) beyond the sky, or svarga. The Rohita's consort is Rohini along the path of which the sun moves (21), and she is Śakti who gives spoils in battle. He is brahman (himself a Śakti) who is made stronger by Brahman (33). Verses 4 to 49 talk of two Agnis estab-

lished by Sūrya, and verse 50 says that one of them is truth (satyam) and the other is in Waters. Rohita created everything (52 to 54).

Hymn XIII.2 :

Here, Rudra, Rohita (the Red One) makes his appearance as the Sun. The sun moves by the power of magic (māyā) (verse 3), as also the moon (verse 1). The seven horses of Sūrya are said to be tawny (yellow) coloured (harit).

Hymn XIII.3 :

The whole hymn number 3 describes the powers and activities of Rohita. According to verse 1, he generated the earth and heaven ; of him the universe is the mantle ; in him abides the six regions in which the sun moves ; and he is the protector (guardian) of brahman, the sacred knowledge (brahma-vidyā). He is the Supreme who breathes (verse 5). In him rests the sacred syllable 'aum' or the three syllables, bhūr, bhuvah, and svar. The golden eagles (breath) descend from him, on to the black earth, and clothing themselves in waters, fly back upto heaven (verse 9). (This is a description of the process of breathing in and out). He is Atri, who dwells in the waters (verse 15), being thousand-rooted (sahasra mūlāh), etc. (cf. my remarks on atri in the Rg Veda in my 'Rg Vedic Studies'). In verse 26, there is a play upon the words, rohati, ruho, ruroha, and rohitah.

Hymn XIII.4 :

Verses 1 to 13 indicate his various names by which he goes, namely Savitar (verse 1) (1), Indra, (2), Dhātṛ and Vāyu (3), Aryaman Varuna, Rudra and Mahadeva (4), and Agni, Sun and Yama (5). The Maruts are his troops (8), and the nine supports in which the casks are set in nine places (the parts of the human body) are his (10) ; finally in verse 13, it is said that all these deities are brought together as One in him. Verses 14 to 28 make it clear that he who knows (ya evam veda) realises, and ultimately becomes, himself, this powerful god, who is Rudra (verse 26). Verse 25 talks of him understandably (Rudra) as death, immortality, and demon (rakṣas). Verse 42 says he is Lord of evil or good, of man or Asura. He is (verse 50) strength, power, might and conquering force, and (51) he is red power, and silvery (rajas) expanse. He is the Supreme brahman power (of the brahma-vidyā) (56).

CHAPTER VII

SOME INDUS VALLEY SEALS.

In this chapter, it is proposed to examine the figures on a few of the well-known Indus Valley Seals in the light of some passages in the Atharva Veda. This is at this stage a purely experimental and preliminary exercise, with the hope and expectation that it may open out new areas for further research. It is to be remembered that scholars have so far undertaken work of this nature only with the Rg Vedic text. This is the first time that the research turns on the Atharvan text.

The focus is on the figures only. No attempt is made to read the script as such, but it is expected that in due course further researches on these lines will cast some light on this aspect also :

1. The first seal to be taken up for study is the famous 'Yogi Seal', which is reproduced as Fig. 1 (Annexure). Though seemingly a realistic picture it is full of symbolisms on the nature of which the Atharva Veda will be found to provide much information.

The unique features of the figure, most of which have been noted by all scholars are :

- (a) The yogic pose of the figure (Muni) on the seat, (āsandī) such as might fall within the description contained in AV verses XV.3.1 and 2 about the Vrātya's āsandī ;
- (b) The two antelopes beneath the seat, suggesting the antelope skin on which the 'Muni' is seated as in the case of XI.5.6, AV verse, for example.
- (c) The cord-like material round the waist, with the raised element where the sex organ should be which may be either the head of a snake, or a large knot of the cord or the erect penis ; this would indicate that the 'Muni' is naked, just like the Vrātya (The verses in paryaya 2 of the Vrātya Hymn, that is Hymn No. XV, AV, speak of 'discernment being the garment of the Vrātya, which would be tanta-

mount to saying that the Vrātya is wrapped in Knowledge only and no other garment, that is to say, he is naked, and his sexual powers, are just like those of the bull Rudra. (The cord worn round the waist is mentioned in AV. VI. 133.1).

(d) The scene is indubitably a forest, and the five animals surrounding the Muni are to be associated with the various items of apparel and accoutrements of the Muni as follows :

<i>Animal</i>	<i>Apparel etc.</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>AV verses</i>
1. Tiger	Skin worn on the body (front)	Power	IV.3; IV.8.4., & 7; IV. 84.3, etc. XII.2.4
2. Elephant	Ivory arm bands and skin on the body	Refulgence and Power	III.22.8
3. Buffalo	Two horns on the head and facial mask	Power	V.3.8
4. Rhinoceros	Single horn on the head	Sexual Potency	III.7.1, 2 and 3
5. Antelopes	Below the seat	Power to grasp the world, meaning 'Control of Mind.'	XI.5.6.

(The Elephant represents Varuṇa, the Rhino, Prajāpati's sexual potency, the Buffalo, Indra, the Tiger, Virāj or Śakti, and the antelope, the fleeting mind which is cloaked by māyā, or avidyā, symbolised by the dark skin.).

(Another way of reading the figure would relate it to the five 'evils' which are brought under control in yogic tapas, or tantra. They are (1) lust, (2) greed, (3) anger, (4) mamata (or egoism), and (5) ignorance (avidyā), which are symbolised in this figure by (1) rhinoceros, (2) the buffalo, (3) the tiger, (4) the elephant, and (5) the antelope, respectively. The Atharva Veda in many hymns,

such as IV.20 (verses 24 and 25), VI.19, VI.41, etc., refers to various evils which have to be first overcome before the initiate could reach the higher levels of yoga. (They may also be seen as representing the five senses).

- (e) Two men walking towards the 'Muni,' one on the right, and the other away on the other side. This seems to symbolise the wandering propensities (*vrājaka*) of the 'Muni' as in the case of the *Vrātya*. (Verse in Paryaya 2, of hymn XV of the *Vrātya* hymn.). They may, in the alternative, represent *magadha* and the *pumsali* accompanying the *Vrātya*.

2. Of the various symbolic elements in the Muni Seal, the most important is the horn. While the central single horn (AV VII.84.3, *srk*, the pointed horn, '*pavim tigmam*', of Indra) denotes sexual virility (a most important faculty of the Vedic devas, asuras and ascetics), the two side ones are the symbol of divinity. The relevant AV verses would be VII.2 and 3, which state that Agni has two horns, or two iron tusks (?), and more especially, the special hymns on the ox (*anaḍvan*, Hymn IV. 11), and the bull (*ṛṣabha*, IX.4.1 and 8). The clinching argument for the horn as being a symbol of divinity is to be found in RV verse I.154.6, where the devas in Viṣṇu's paradise are said to be 'horned and nimble oxen.'

3. The Atharva Veda's bull and ox are 'syncretised' animals (as I have shown elsewhere), and they possess '*viśva-rūpa*' (AV IX.5.25). This is the symbolism underlying the so-called 'unicorn', (which is also a 'syncretised' animal bearing a close resemblance to the 'syncretised' bull and rhino (for the single horn) of the AV.), and the bull in the Indus Valley Seals. The cosmogonic hymns (especially of the AV) deem the creator to be a sexually highly potent bull, passionate with Desire (*Kāma*, *Mainyu*, *Vena*, and *Gandharva*).

Fig. 2 shows the majestic Bull, being the *ṛṣabha*, which gives rise to the concept of *vṛṣabha*, as the creator (in Hinduism and Jainism).

Fig. 3 is the 'unicorn', the syncretised 'ox' of the Atharva Veda.

4. The figure (Fig. 4) of a man in standing posture, holding up 2 tigers with each arm on either side of himself is quite apparently a pictorial representation of verse AV IV.8.7 (*vyāgram pariśasva*). Actually, the verse refers to a tiger and a lion, and not two tigers, as seen in the seal. (cf. Mesopotamian Seals).

5. AV Verse V.4.1 talks of *kuṣṭha* (apparently a medicine man, perhaps Atharvan or Rudra) attacking fatal fever (or death). Amongst the seals, we have one (Fig. 5) which depicts a horned bull (with fore-legs lifted up), having claw-like hoofs, attacking from the rear a horned dog (or wolf) which could be one of Yama's *sārameya* dogs. (cf. AV. IX. 4.16).

6. It is the same *sārameya* dog which appears in another seal (Fig. 6). Here, a human being (or deva) is seated on a tree' at the foot of which is a departing animal, looking up at the figure on the tree branch which is apparently issuing some orders to the beast. (This animal is generally thought to be a tiger, because of the stripes on the body, but it must be remembered that the *Sārameyas* are said to be 'brindled', that is, striped dogs.) There is a close resemblance here to the picture portrayed in AV VI.95.1, when read with RV verse X.135. The former talks of an '*aśvattha*' tree as being the seats of the immortal devas, and the latter of Yama being seated on the 'Tree clothed with goodly leaves' (verse 1), in the 'Home of the gods (verse 7).

7. There is a seal which shows the figure of a hunter (archer) stalking game. There are stripes on his body, and a horned hood adorns his head (Fig. 7). This is apparently a hunting deva, (horned head), who may be seen as Rudra.

8. The AV hymn VII and verse X.8.9 refer to a reversed 'bowl', (which obviously refers to the upper firmament), and other similar verses talk of 'drops' pouring down. A kindred imagery is to be found in RV also as pointed out by I. Mahadevan in a paper (entitled 'The Cult object on Unicorn Seals: A sacred Filter'), read at Tokyo in September, 1983. (With his permission, I am reproducing the relevant diagrams of that paper). I would like to carry his analysis a little further. It is to be noted that there are 3 filters or bowls, and 12 drops (in 3 sets of 4 each) in his Pl. I Fig. 5 and that, in Fig. 4 of the same plate, there is a double-

headed axe held up by a man. This would recall the Rg Vedic myth of Brhaspati's axe fashioned for him by Tvaṣṭr with the aid of which a single bowl (the year) is split up into 2, 3 or 4 smaller cups (seasons), variously stated to be 3 or 4, totalling 12 months, (made up of 3 months each, and the seasons are 4). The number of seasons are also said, both in the Rg and the Atharva Veda as to be 6 (maximum). The number 6 (in 6 vertical strokes) appears along with a 4-part bowl of a peculiar structure in Fig. 2 of the same plate (all reproduced in Annexure). The curious bowl of this figure represents perhaps the four-tier cosmological structure of the Vedas, and the four 'scripts' seem to confirm this. The correspondence seems to be as follows :

- (i) Lower part of the bowl—Earth—Represented by geometrical quadrilateral figure with a triangle at the corner.
- (ii) First (lowest) upper part of the bowl—Antarikṣa Eye diagram, part of the bowl.
- (iii) Next higher—Sky—Fish diagram.
- (iv) Highest—Heaven—Spear.

The central point where the earth touches the upper region represents, in my view, the Skambha, 'the pillar of fire' of the Rg and Atharva Vedas.

(Plates reproduced from I. Mahadevan's paper with his permission—Plates I and II of his paper are reproduced in Annexure).

8. Another seal to be found in Mahadevan's plates referred to above is Fig. 3 of Plate I, which I reproduce here as Fig. 8. It depicts three human beings walking one behind another, each carrying over his head objects of different sorts. Reading from right to left, the first appears to be a flag, the second a figure of a bull on a base, and the third a somewhat stylised umbrella (and not a bowl as Mahadevan sees it). This is a figure demonstrating the procession at an Indra festival, the bull in this case being a Vedic representation of Indra. Description of such a festival in a limited way is to be found in the Kausika Sūtra, but in a more elaborate form in the Tamil epic Silappadikaram. Even to-day, in Tamil Nadu, the street procession of gods and goddesses, and principally of

Viṣṇu, bears a close similarity to this picture. (Viṣṇu as is well-known, completely took over all the functions and powers of Indra in later Hinduism).

These are merely samples of the close similarities that can be found between Indus Valley Seals and the two Vedic Samhitas. My studies reveal that the Atharva Veda provides more such cases than the Rg. It would require a separate work for a more exhaustive analysis than this brief survey.

I do not propose to examine other instances of this nature, with which scholars are already familiar, such as mortar and pestle (representing Śakti and Śaivite allied cults), or female figurines (also representing Śakti). Both my earlier 'Rg Vedic Studies' and the present work on the Atharva Veda abound with instances of Śakti and Śiva (Rudra) cults and the allied tantrism and yoga practices, especially in the latter text.

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE—THE RG AND ATHARVA VEDAS.

With an unanimity rare in Indological studies, the Atharva Veda has been condemned, as mentioned earlier, to ignominious oblivion by being dubbed a book of sorcery and black magic, not deserving serious examination. So complete has been this attitude that no consideration has been given at all to certain fundamental questions that are posed by it, at least two of which are striking and obvious : Firstly, how did a work of this nature, if indeed such an interpretation is correct, come to be included in the Vedic corpus, as a piece of revealed religion, ' seen ' by the ṛsis in mystic trance, as the Vedic saṁhitās are in Hindu tradition held to be ? Secondly, what has been its impact and destiny in Hinduism ? It is a most extra-ordinary fact that questions of this nature have not even been raised. The text has been totally ignored, and the reason for that is the total ignorance of the esoteric nature of the text which is not revealed by a mere literal reading.

Maurice Winternitz, with a perspicuity which can only be attributed to inspiration, was probably the only scholar of eminence who held the view over 80 years ago that the Atharvan text must be seen as complementary to the Rg Veda. He opined that only thus can a true picture of the Vedic times be drawn. His suggestion has not been followed up and it was not possible to do so, so long as the text was seen as nothing but sorcery and magic. The anomaly is too great.

Fortunately, it is now possible to penetrate the symbolism which has so far concealed successfully the esoteric meaning of the Atharvan text. The endeavour in this work has been just this, namely to present a complete picture of the meaning as has now been revealed. While doing so, the references to the related textual passages has been kept down to the bare minimum possible. This have been necessitated both by the nature of the subject as well as by the accumulated debris of the prejudices that have been built up around this Veda.

In the circumstances, it was thought that an introduction—which is all that this present work can claim to be—to the new interpretation should first begin with a narration of the facts, followed thereafter by the evidence, thus reversing the procedure as is usually adopted, for example, in the case of Rg Veda which, by way of contrast, is backed by innumerable exegetic works. The necessary evidence can be deemed to be complete and satisfactory only if it be an exhaustive, verse-by-verse, commentary, not necessarily accompanied by a new translation. However, even a comprehensive commentary of this nature poses many problems of time, effort and cost that could not be overcome at this stage. Accordingly, the next best alternative has been adopted, namely to limit the explanatory notes to the most basic elements in the various passages. For the time being, this is all that is possible. A full commentary has to be postponed for a more propitious occasion.

The Atharva Veda now reveals itself as a work on yoga and tantrism. In Hindu traditional thinking, this is a sacrificial ritual carried out within the human body, in contrast to the external sacrifice advocated in the Rg and Yajur Vedas. Thus, the dream of Winternitz has come true. The Atharvan text provides the missing link in the history of Vedism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism, both before and after the so-called Vedic period.

The Rg and Atharva Vedas—in their new rendering—must always be read together, if a total and correct picture of the evolution of concepts and practices in this environment is to be achieved.

I shall now proceed to attempt a brief essay of this kind. For the time being, the linguistic aspect will be totally by-passed even though it has much to contribute to this subject. The prevailing notions about the linguistic history of India avoid many uneasy questions relating to the origin of the Sanskrit (and the related Avestan) language and the relationship between the Indo-Aryan and other languages of this region. This is too vast a subject to be gone into here, and its consideration must be postponed to another occasion. Tentative investigations, however, indicate that the final outcome of the relevant studies will not run counter what appears in the following paras about the historical evolution of Vedic and Hindu religious concepts and practices.

That the roots of the Rg and Atharva Vedas lie in the Indus Valley appears to be almost certain. The evidence therefor, both positive and negative, appears to be overwhelming.

The most important fact is that there is nothing,—linguistics and a few myths apart—in the Vedas pointing to any geographical and cultural connection with regions outside the sub-continent, or areas (such as Afghanistan, etc., in the north-west) peripheral to it. More positive evidence has begun to emerge from the noticeably very close parallels in concept between the Indus Valley seals and the Atharva Veda, some examples of which have been produced in one of the preceding chapters. (One example relates a seal directly to the Kauṣika Sūtra, and even more intimately to the Tamil classic, *Silappadikaram*). More such cases are expected to be traced in future. The prevailing linguistic views may appear to present obstacles to this view. But as already stated a general re-examination of this aspect is bound to remove them. Meanwhile, even the present reading of the two Vedas has provided already sufficient and necessary pointers to this conclusion.

Clearly then, we have enough material based on this Indus Valley—Rg-and-Atharva Veda combination for a synthetic version of a probable Ur Veda (Original or Root Veda). Even more interestingly the Atharvan text provides material for going back to an era anterior to the Ur Veda stage itself.

The evidence for this turns on the nature, character and cultural creativity of the Atharvan priest, whose innovations are aided and progressed by Brhaspati. The process known as 'brahmanization' is established beyond reasonable doubt by the Atharva Veda, though glimpses of it may be had even in the Rg Veda. On the extent of acceptable brahmanization of anterior ascetic cults, there is a certain amount of common agreement as well as deep opposition between the two texts, which appear to be merely a continuation of tensions already prevailing in the Indus Valley.

The result of the partial brahmanization of the Indus Valley cults seems to have resulted in their breakdown in three mutually opposed directions, namely, various forms of asceticism outside the Vedic cricle, (both anarchical and anomic such as the tantric school and just world-renouncing, such as Jainism, and Buddhism), a partial and reformed asceticism within the yajna environment,

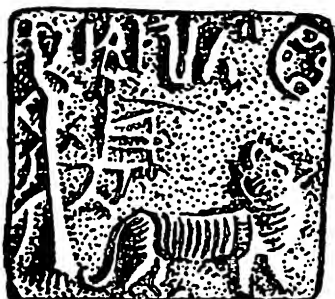
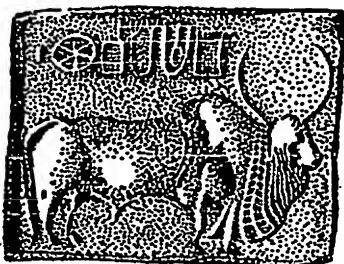
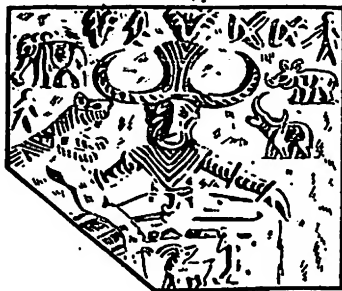
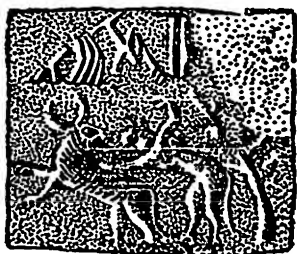
and a sacrificial cult totally opposed to ascetic concepts altogether. Simultaneously, a brahmanization of the religious concepts, accompanied by great linguistic changes, as well as a social re-organization on the lines of caste, has kept pace with these changes.

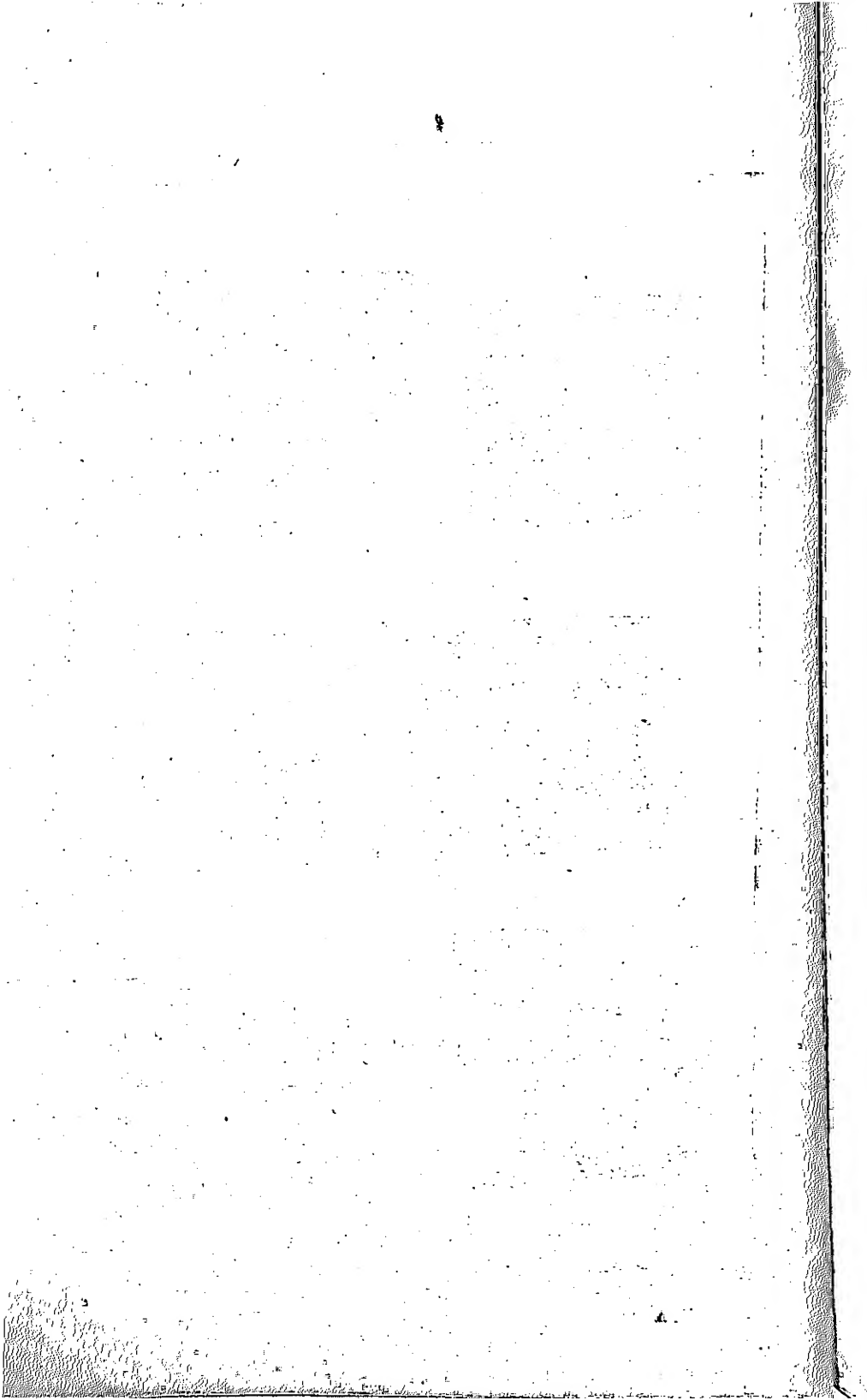
The Atharvan text teaches a unity of Knowledge and Practice. The changes above-mentioned break up this unity within the so-called orthodox circle which looks to the Rg Veda as its inspiration, leaving the concept of unity to the so-called heterodox, non-Vedic schools. Out of the latter have come Buddhism, modern Jainism and also some Siddha and Natha sects whose acceptance of the authority of the Vedas is only nominal, if there is any at all.

The break-down of the unity of Knowledge and Practice within the Vedic environment has had important consequences. The Knowledge portion was relegated to the Upaniṣads from which the Vedantic schools have emerged. The practice, which in the Atharva Veda meant Yoga and Tantra, was re-interpreted by a tour de-force to mean at first the sacrificial ritual of the Rg and Yajur Vedas, since the power and status of the priests depended on the latter. The term 'Karma' was adopted for this purpose, but with the decay of the sacrificial religion—inevitable in the face of the tapasic 'Knowledge—it was linked up with dharma, as interpreted in the powerful, and growing schools of varnāśrama dharma. It is in that sense that it is used in the last great theoretical work in support of varnāśrama dharma, namely the Bhagavad Gita, which is also simultaneously the first and most magnificent bulwark of the Bhakti schools. This may appear to be a paradox but it is nevertheless perfectly justifiable on rational grounds. The Bhakti schools posed a serious threat to the institution of varnāśrama dharma, even more serious than that which came from the heterodox schools; the latter were external enemies, but Bhakti would have been a more insidious enemy from within but for the rationalizations first formulated by the Bhagavad-Gita.

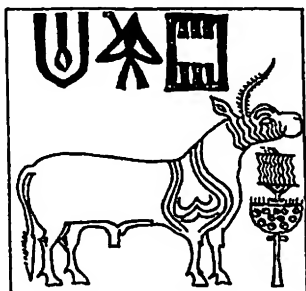
These are matters which require great elaboration which is not possible in a short work of the present nature, whose scope is very much limited. The brief discussion is intended merely to highlight the importance of the Atharva Veda in the history of Hinduism.

APPENDIX—I

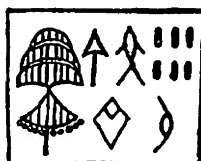




APPENDIX—II



1



2



3



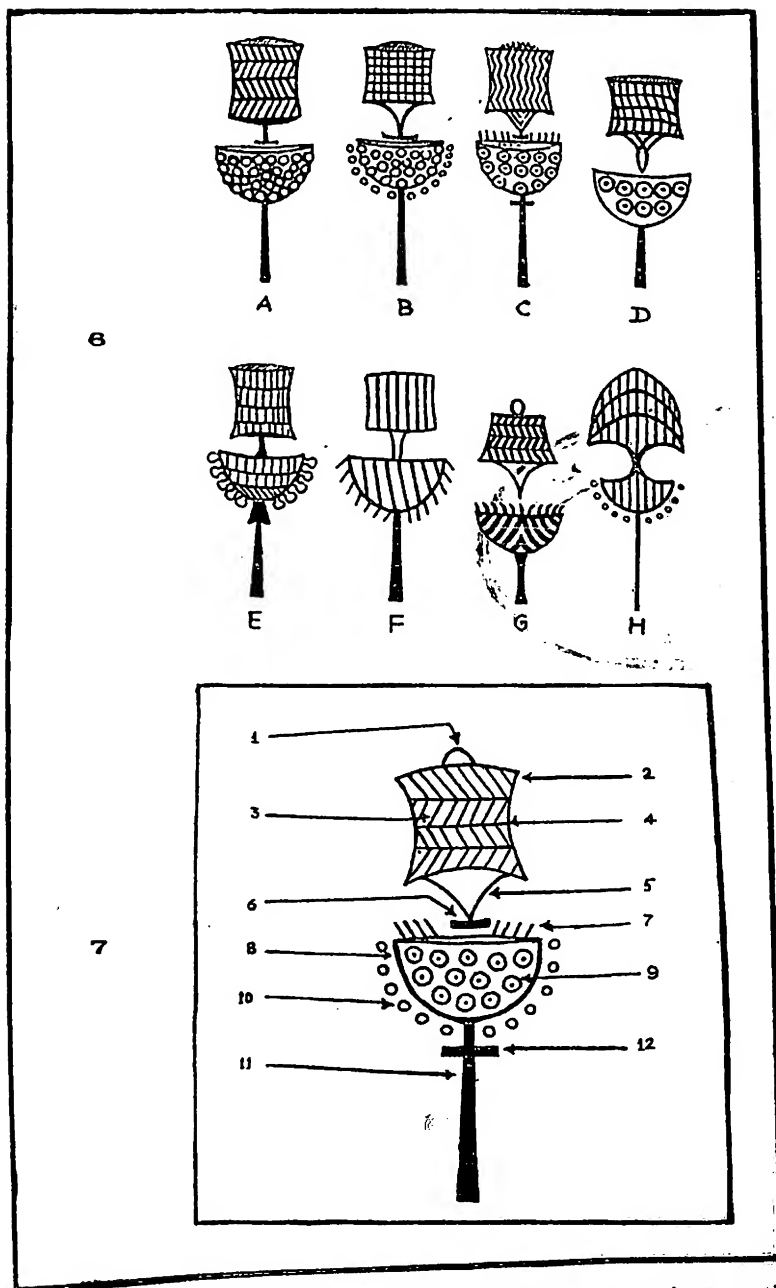
4



5

From I. Mahadevan's paper "The cult object on unicorn seals: A sacred Filter?" (Read at Tokyo in September, 1983) (Plate I).

APPENDIX—III



From I. Mahadevan's paper, "The cult object on unicorn seal;
A sacred Filter?" (Read at Tokyo in September). (Plate II).

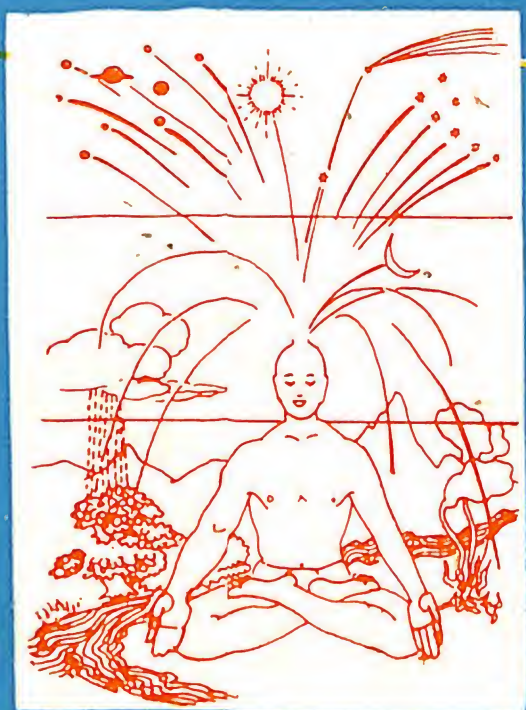


THE AUTHOR

Mr. M. Sundar Raj, the author of this book, was born in Madras on the 1st December, 1918. He holds the M. A. degree of the Madras University, and was in succession, a teacher and an administrator in a financial branch of the Central Government in India, where he has held very high posts.

The present work is the result of extensive studies carried out over thirty years during his leisure moments. The central aspect of these studies, which were not confined only to this branch of knowledge, have been always his native Hindu religion and culture. They have been pursued with a one-pointed zeal, love and devotion. He has spent some time abroad in the pursuit of knowledge, believing always that it is only right knowledge which can lead to right action.

This is his second book, the first entitled "Rg Vedic Studies" (Six Parts) was released last September (Sept. 1983) by the same publishers. His researches in Indology, both Sanskrit and Tamil, on various facets of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain culture are continuing and he hopes to produce some more work in book form, articles in journals and periodicals, etc. He has already to his credit a number of published articles both on Tamil and Sanskrit subject matter.



ĀROHANA -
THE ASCENT